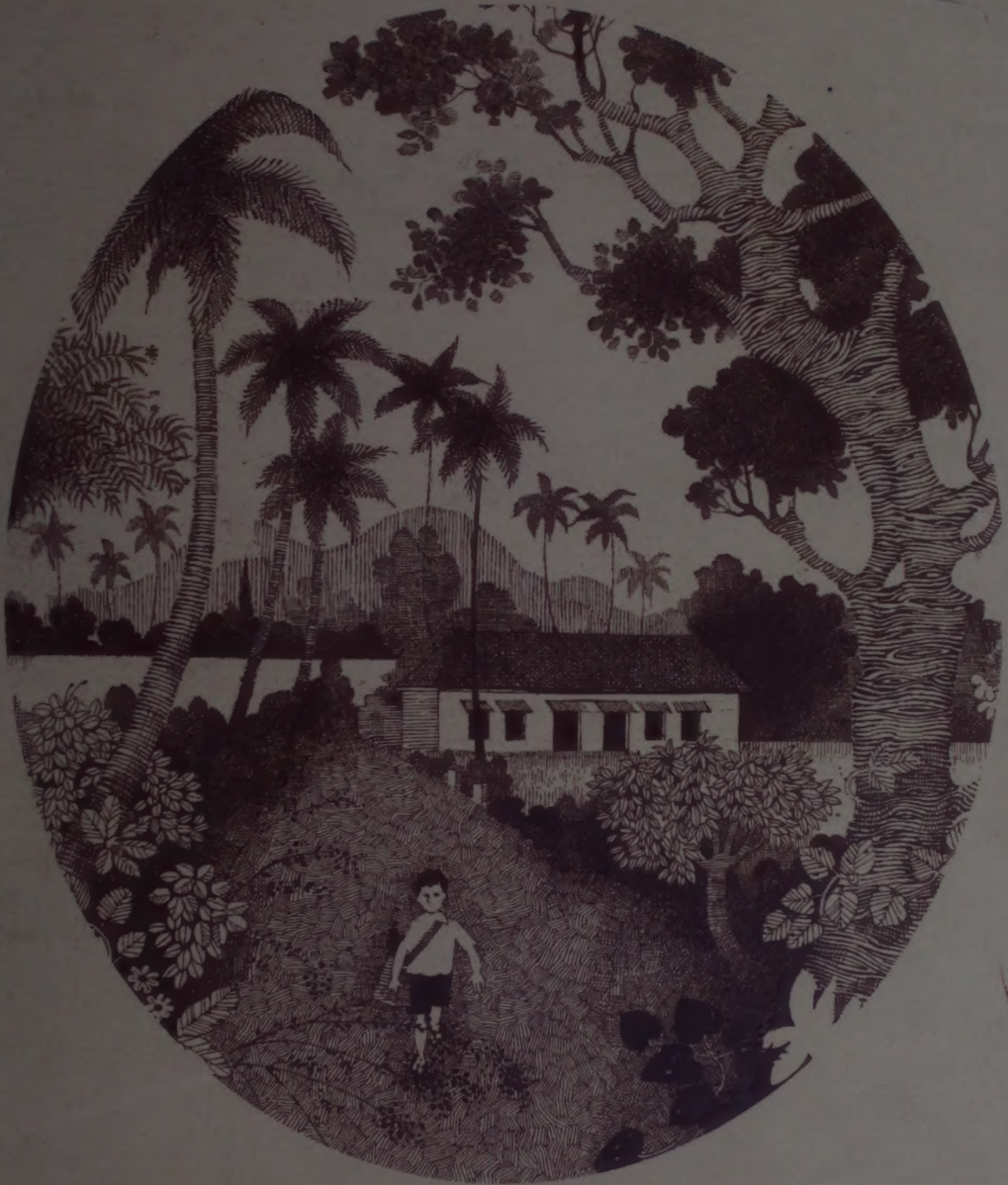


My Goa

- an autobiography



Luízinho Faleiro



Luizinho Faleiro is one of Goa's most promising politicians. In a field generally associated in India with gerantocrats, sycophants and time-servers, Luizinho Faleiro is refreshingly innovative, bold, outspoken and at 47, young. With a Masters in commerce and a degree in law, he belongs to that very tribe of educated and sophisticated politicians. He takes justified pleasure and pride that he came up the hard way, by his own bootstraps, but along a very predictable route: from student activist to labour leader to political revolutionary.

He has been in active politics for about 20 years, over seven of which as a minister. He was voted by his Congress party peers the Chief Minister of his state at a time of great political turmoil because he seemed to be the only ray on an otherwise bleak horizon. For reasons he explains in this frank autobiography he resigned in just about 70 days. He is that kind of a man! Rather break than bend.

He has penned this book with sincerity and humility. It is a straight-from-the-heart report to the citizens of Goa, an autobiography in a sense, a rendering of accounts in another and perhaps the main aspect.

My Goa

an autobiography

Luizinho Faleiro

Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes Memorial Trust
Luchel, Borda, Margao, Goa

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To

*Mother
to whom I owe myself*

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To The Reader

This book has been in the making for sometime. Meanwhile - as if seven governments in five years between 1990 and 1995 weren't enough - some more governments rose and fell in circumstances that, to say the least, were far from ideal. One thing leading to another, I found myself in the Chief Minister's chair for a brief while - hardly 70 days, but it was a very educative experience. I saw from very close quarters the best and worst of politics at work, the *real politic*, in all its ruthlessness, in all its ferocity and in a way mindlessness.

When, about two years ago, I thought of writing this book, I was assailed by serious doubts. Why am I burdening you, the reader, with this book? Is it going to be a catalogue of virtues that you may emulate? Or an inventory of personal experiences that could either amuse or sadden you and just might make interesting reading ?

After much soul-searching, I arrived at a conclusion. Indeed, just as there were weighty reasons to not embark on this venture, there was a justification and also the inner urge of putting pen to paper and outpour my memories as I remembered them from my childhood, specially the post-liberation period and then on.

I had other questions. Where and how could I find the time to gather my thoughts and articulate them? How much of what I have been witness to in my none-too-few years in politics, nearly 20 years come to think of it, could I disclose without hurting old friends? Or how much could I divulge without exposing myself to the charge of being unnecessarily indiscreet? Or, brazenly inventive? And right now I

am readying for a new election. If finding time, always a scarce commodity with me, was difficult, it is now a nightmare.

After 70-odd days as my state's chief minister, the highest honour any Goan could aspire, I also owe my fellow-Goans an apology for having, albeit reluctantly but nevertheless helplessly, connived and colluded with power seekers who had their own private agenda when they goaded me into believing that they were loyal to me and had the welfare and progress of Goa and Goans at heart.

But all said and done, I must share with my fellow-citizens my experiences, my hopes and aspirations, successes and fulfilment, and also failures, disappointments and frustrations. The good and the bad, the sacrifices and the betrayals, dreams achieved, dreams shattered. And the dreams still being dreamed, despite all the obstacles and impediments in their way. And dreams not yet dreamed. On the hope that the citizens, particularly the younger amongst them, will learn from our errors and follies. And perhaps, also the hope that they will pick up the threads of the good work one, somehow, managed to do, and carry on from where one might leave off, when one's time is up, and one has to bow out from this exciting — if often seen by the frustrated and dissatisfied public as murky — profession of politics.

The last few years, particularly from 1990 onwards, have been years of political instability. Of defections and counter-defections. That aberrant behaviour of our contemporary politicians, whatever the party, or ideological background — even the independents, whose independence was, in fact, a brazen misnomer, — was the biggest hurdle on the path of Goa's progress.

Shifting loyalties and self-interest gnawed at the roots of good governance. Political instability became endemic. And as a result, the chief ministers - every single Chief Minister, me included - had to, per

force, make compromises. Rather than apply their mind to the progress and development of their constituencies and of Goa, legislators squandered their time and wasted their talents on petty political games and in the pursuit of self-interest: the proverbial loaves and fishes of office. A kind of greed that knew no limits and had no qualms. Because of conflicting interests, stalemate became the order of the day. And we brought down the prestige of the State of Goa, and of Goans. Few realized that, in the process, they were bringing down their own reputation and inscribing their names in muck.

Every single Chief Minister, in these last few years, for lack of ideology and ferocious rapacity, had to abet defections. Even I. The people of Goa deserved better behaviour from their elected representatives. Goa is a land of such glorious traditions. It deserves the brightest future. It is a forward-looking state. It has an enviable culture, reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of its people. Reflected, as well, in its social and economic indicators, its high level of awareness and consciousness. And, look, what we did to it! Isn't it a shame?!

All of us, who have been and are in politics, owe Goa and Goans an unqualified apology. I tendered it the day I submitted my resignation. And I do it here, once again. Contritely and humbly! I remember reading somewhere that "free and fearless, progressive and progressing - that is the Goa of our times". In contrast, "splendour and greed, pomp and misery, the tyranny of conquerors, and the compassion of good missionaries, the daring of adventurers and the abnegation of martyrs - violence and humility" - that was the Goa that was. In a way, yes. In more than one way, however, we strayed from the right path.

I was a child of ten when the Goa that *was* yielded place to the Goa that *is*. The day was December 18, 1961. We were all huddled in the church of our village. Airforce planes overflew us, army tanks moved

on the narrow roads, their powerful chained wheels crawling and lifting in their teeth chunks of asphalt and grinding them to powder on their way, like gigantic caterpillars, to the garrison the Portuguese would surrender any minute. Those awesome machines, we had never seen them before. To the innocent minds of our peaceful elders, they were *raan-gadde*, carts that ran through jungles. They certainly seemed forbidding and inexorable. Far beyond, the retreating Portuguese were detonating mines and bombs. The impact could be felt and seen on the mud walls of poor peoples' hutments. Would they also obliterate Goa out of existence? We ardently hoped not, as we mumbled the prayers that came to our desperate minds. We held on to our scapulars while the elders told the beads of their rosaries.. We had heard that faith in one's scapular had saved many a drowning person. And that was all we had within our immediate reach to escape the fear of annihilation in the crossfire between yesterday's *masters* and tomorrow's *rulers*.

At that time, I could hardly imagine that, not very much later, I would have a hand in shaping the land we had re-inherited on that day. I have the humility to reckon and admit that I am not an intellectual... Or a writer. Though Goa's development and economic progress are my main concerns, I know I am not an economist in the academic sense of the word. Neither am I a social scientist or a political philosopher. But, yes, I have come up from the grassroots, the hardest of hard ways. I always had my ear to the ground. And come to think of it, I always seemed to have my priorities right, whether as a student activist, union leader or politician agitating for Konkani or Statehood. Or for ecology. Or for the disadvantaged. I always had a sense of purpose and, happily, a sense of direction. And God be my witness, I still do. I know that much still remains to be done for Goa, for Goans like me who feel that the happenings in Goa during the post-liberation

era almost marginalized them and did irreparable damage to Goa, our ethos, our beliefs, our vision. Having had a ringside view of the way things have gone, maybe I can put my finger on the sore and tender points.

During the two months I was the Chief Minister of Goa, I tried to put my objectives into practice. I didn't fully succeed. In fact, there were moments of anguish and pain when I felt that some of my peers were holding me to ransom, making demands that, if I dared resist I might forever regret. I was, indeed, happy when I finally put in my papers. However laudable my thoughts and however pious my hope and honest my deeds might have been - and, honest to God they surely were - I could not disown my collective responsibility in what was going on. As the leader at the time I ought to have been less complacent. But, as a consolation of sorts, I can, modesty apart, also claim that I did my best to spread the message that the *People are the Masters*. Serve them better. Be clean. Be efficient. For, that is the key to progress. Abide by the people's aspirations. Government's resolve and responsive administration are of the essence. People have to get their work done as a matter of right, within a reasonable time-frame.

I also emphasized on the other aspects of good governance. It might have been the style of colonial bureaucrats to tell the petitioners, "*Venha amanhã*", come tomorrow. Civil servants of free Goa couldn't and mustn't do it. I directed every department to put up a board specifying time-frames. For example, the Transport Department had to make it clear: driving licenses would be issued in X days, licences would be renewed in Y days, learner's licences would be given in Z days. Every department was instructed to have a complaints box. The head of the department should himself/herself open it at the end of the day, and attend to grievances and suggestions within 24 hours. And if that should not be possible, to write to the complainant giving the reasons

and asking for time. I insisted on accountability. Every fortnight, the heads of department would submit to the Chief Minister, through the proper channels, a report detailing the complaints received, and redressed, and if not, - the reason why not. I had followed that built-in methodology when I was Minister for Industries. Matters had to be disposed of quickly and diligently. And, in order to translate thoughts into reality, I issued several circulars to tone up the administration and ensure vigilance.

Should I once again be given the privilege of leading this State, I will start from where I left off.

I laid down the norms: Create a culture of honesty. And I tightened up the procedures to bring a corrupt official to book. I also insisted on urgency because the bigger the delays the greater the scope for political interference. In my view corruption is a consequence of the system. Rare is the official who is corrupt when he begins his career. Government officials get exposed and eventually used to the crudities around them, the rat race and its aberrations. And, when that happens, corruption becomes the norm, an ethic of a kind, whereby the giver acquires a right and the taker makes a commitment - to bend, if not altogether break, the rule and the law to suit individual convenience. The thing to do, therefore, is keep his/her primal values intact and wholesome.

I insisted on greater transparency in administration. Government had already enacted the Right to Information Act and notified the competent authorities thereunder. That had opened up the functioning of the government departments to greater public scrutiny. There might be some occasions when there is necessity to maintain secrecy, where discretion has to be exercised. But once discretion is exercised or, as in matters of tenders, once the tender is finalised, there is no need for

secrecy. But it's one thing to be aware of what goes on and how to remedy, it is quite another to convey the message to the public and embolden it to insist on its rights rather than resign to what is seen as inevitable. I, therefore, set in motion a new methodology. Demoralization prevailed. The trend had to be reversed. I tried to, the best of my ability. I insisted on - and while I was there implemented - a new code of ethics. Simple things really, but effective. An example: I made it mandatory to publish on the notice board of each department/organization, the details of all the cases regarding tenders or out-of-turn allotments or discretion exercised in favour of an employee/party. This, I thought, would go a long way in reducing wrong decisions and would automatically check corruption.

I also ordered that departmental inquiries must be speedy. There is an impression that government employees are not sufficiently rewarded for good work and are not punished promptly in case of omission and commission. One reason for delay in punishment is the delay in concluding the disciplinary inquiry proceedings. The departmental inquiries are, in turn, delayed mainly because of flawed proceedings. Then adjournments are frivolously requested and freely granted. This question was seriously addressed by me and a whole new mechanism put in place. Justice delayed is not only justice denied but it also results in the slow death of the citizen's faith in the rule of law. That is how, in my view, might becomes right. And that is how perversion gets institutionalised.

I also ordered that post-tender negotiations for supply of stores and execution of public works, another perverse procedure, developed over the years into a fine art, be banned totally. Except in the case of negotiations with the lowest tenderer, the department had to go in for re-tendering. And I also ordered the setting up of an Information Facilitation Centre at the Secretariat, with the help of National

Informatics Centre, in order to access information for the public within the shortest time. The information was to be fed to the computers as soon as the Information Facilitation Centre was ready. But by then I was gone... Besides, I drafted and officialised the Information Technology Policy that, if implemented, will put Goa at par with the most advanced centres of the world - yes, the most advanced centres of the world.

So, in all honesty, I feel I have a story I must tell. And may I be forgiven for the slightest trace of conceit or egoism if that should be the reader's judgement. I will welcome and value criticism, harsh if need be. And learn one more lesson in my life.

Navelim:

Gudi Padwa, 1999 (March 18)

Luizinho Faleiro

Born To Struggle

I no longer remember the day or the month. Not even the year but I remember perfectly well the incident. I was seated at my small desk reading inattentively as children of my age, about five to six years, would, my Portuguese lesson for the day, when my mother walked in, on tip-toe, and slapped me twice, once on each cheek, as hard as she could, and indeed harder than any of my friends' mothers did. She admonished me. Why couldn't I concentrate on my studies? Hadn't she told me, a thousand times, every day that she could remember since she had been widowed, that unless I did well in school, I would get nowhere. That, instead, I would be her biggest burden in life? Didn't I care for the hopes she had pinned on me? Had I no head? No heart? And all I had really done that day was bunk class and play football with my companions and dirtied my khaki pants and shirt. They were all delinquents to her mind. If idling in the church square and playing football was all I had set my heart on, that is where, to her immense shame and disappointment, I would end up. Indeed, many were the sacrifices she had to make to feed us, her children. We were two. And my father had, from his previous marriage, two children.

She had to toil from dawn to well past ten in the night cooking, sewing, doing a thousand chores and praying all the time to God, to beg favours and thank Him for sparing her and us from a fate worse than the one she stoically endured. For having the courage to still hope for better days. For not giving up.

And she gave me two more stinging slaps, lest I forget that the



punishment the next time would be far harsher.

That was not the first time something like that had happened to me. Nor the last. And I wondered why. I was, in my own view, the most well-behaved of my siblings. The least troublesome in my class, perhaps in the entire school. And yet my mother treated me more harshly than any of her other children. I never really understood her. Until I saw her frail body on the marble top of a dissection table of the Hospicio Hospital's mortuary. A heavy duty truck, rushing to the mine pit to fetch its last load of laterite stone for the day and earn its owner-driver his incentive bonus, had knocked her down fatally. She was on her way, as she did all her life, in the twilight, just before sunset, to the chapel in our small and disadvantaged ward of the large, and ancient, village of Navelim, to conduct community prayers of thanksgiving for the day.

And suddenly I fully understood her, her philosophy, her attitude, her behaviour. I was no longer the shy and diffident little boy groping his way through life. I was now a Member of the Legislative Assembly of my State, one of the youngest in its history, also one who had worked his way up the hard way and was respected for it by his constituents. For, modesty apart, I had some achievements to my name

And that very minute a thousand images unwound themselves before my eyes. Was I three or four? No matter, Father, I was told, had died. I wish I could remember his face. I remember, though, that an elder had chided me in the church where his obsequies were about to be held. "Sons of dead men don't smile" he said. Perhaps that is what I had been doing, grateful to those who kissed me and said kind words of grief and commiseration. And I also remembered that on the dawn of his funeral day a big gathering of people, neighbours and

relatives, had assembled at my house and a thatched cooking hut was temporarily erected for the preparations of the massive wake. The cooking was akin to the annual feasts of the village Patron Saint, Easter, Christmas and New Year. Grief and happiness seemed to me but two sides of the same coin. And as a child I was bemused by that .

Then came 1961. And with it began a trying period of my life. I had just entered the Escola Técnica later renamed *Commercial*, an excellent secondary government school run by Goan teachers to the exacting standards laid down by the Portuguese. It was not only the three R's we were taught . We were also encouraged to learn arts and craft, to sing, to ask questions, difficult if they had to so be, and seek answers, and if they didn't fully satisfy us, to ask for clarifications.

I remember some of my teachers. More than any other, Professor Franjoão, one of the kindest and nicest persons I ever met. He is unforgettable. His full name was Francisco João Dias, Franjoão to friends, our teacher of arts and craft, a painter of repute, who wore a bowtie and his hair long, a stern man in a way, but who encouraged his pupils, me most of all, and for the strange reason that, in my quest to create things with my hands, I often ruined the equipment entrusted to me. Breaking a tool or two mattered little to him.. The desire to use them for a good purpose was commendable, he felt. And that in a way, shaped my attitude and pattern of behavior. I learnt early that there was dignity in using your hands, soiling them if you had to. And years later, when I became a politician, that became my slogan to the youth of Goa. Use your hands as much as you use your head. The manual jobs you refuse today will be taken up by somebody else, perhaps a migrant worker, whose children will go to school and college and then compete with your children.

And almost suddenly, certainly unexpectedly, I had risen to be a young political leader, who was — and remains — part and parcel of free Goa's evolutionary process, who has contributed all along his career — whether as an MLA, a labour union leader, a minister, or just a social worker — to campaigns vital to Goa's interest, be it Statehood, the recognition of Konkani as our official language, the rights of the backward communities, the protection of environment, help to the disadvantaged, the old and the infirm, or the prevention of crime, or the punishment of the corrupt and the venal.

When, at last, I found myself alone in the mortuary, I knelt before my mother, bowed my head, tried to compose a prayer of gratitude to her, of praise of her fortitude, of her insistence that study I had to. Words failed me. Then tears welled in my eyes. They came to me in torrents.

And I remember her in the midst of my election campaigns. In the legislative assembly meetings, in my years of apprenticeship as a student leader, as a labour leader. Perhaps that is the way it ought to be. My mother's youngest son, once the cause on many apprehensions, now, his youthful demons exorcised, silent and reverent.

To her I owe the best I have in me.. work culture, work ethics, work discipline and dignity in life. Because of it I could develop a clear perspective, establish my priorities and pursue my objectives with diligence. I could also resist the temptations dangled before me — and the reader will soon be privy to — and have a clear conscience.

And to her, I also owe my resolve of restoring power to the people. In the few days I was the Chief Minister, I realized that, contrary to first appearances, it is a relatively easy task. All it requires is the will to do it. As in my other struggles, clarity of purpose was of the essence.

And so I took the government to the doorstep of my fellow Goans, particularly the oppressed, the disadvantaged, those who were despairing and beginning to rue that freedom had meant little or nothing to them.

And I embarked on my Janata Darbars. I decided that I would go to every nook and corner of Goa. I would take with me all the concerned secretaries of government, the IAS, and, also, the heads of departments, the engineers, the collectors, the mamlatdars, the whole lot. It would be an opportunity for the citizen and the administration to meet and interact. At the end of the Darbar, the administration would know what the people expected of them and the people would realize the problems and limitations of the administration. A *via media* would be found. And, without any fear of rebuttal, denial or contradiction, I am happy to state that problems that had remained unsolved for years, as many as seventeen in a case or two, were solved, in some instances, on the spot.

My Janata Darbars have been criticized. I remain unrepentant. I know what my intentions were. I will share with you some of the results achieved. During my two months as Chief Minister, I was up at 6 a.m., met the people at 7, and seldom slept before 2 a.m. — the next day. But it was a pleasure. I never felt fatigue. The happiness of doing a job well and consciously kept me going and spurred me to go on, and on.

Introspection is one of my few virtues. And I ask myself, again and again, Why Darbars? What did I achieve? Much, I must say. The people had been, I dare say, victims of inefficiency, lack of transparency, and maladministration. They had come down to begging for what was due to them, in fact overdue. Roads were neglected, some for years together. I issued immediate instructions. I wanted them done up within fifteen days and, in view of some genuine difficulties, extended the

period to a month. But done they were. Before I laid down office, citizens of Canacona, one of Goa's traditionally neglected *talukas*, sent me a message, "Come, we'll go on a *padyatra* with you, right up to Pernem". They were so happy that, at last, their main grievances had been solved, in such a short time.

Elsewhere, public grievances had been left unattended. Government servants had been insensitive to them. The legislators, enmeshed in their ego-trips, had lost their perspectives. And the multiplier effect of those attitudes had been a feeling of hopelessness and doom. So, I decided to re-sensitize the bureaucracy, to re-orient the legislators. I cannot claim absolute and total success. But the way was shown. It will be my regret that time was short, and I could not reach some areas, like Pernem. Hopefully, their day will come. But wherever I went, the results were most interesting.

An example: the first phase of the Margao sewerage plant, estimated at the planning stage at three crore rupees, had remained incomplete for fifteen years. And pray, why? Because of such simple - and in hindsight stupid - reasons: missing links, costing peanuts; tanks had been built atop hills, but the pipelines had not been laid. The cart had been placed before the horse... And the result had been heavy cost — and time-overruns. They were set right, almost on the spot.

Another example. The people of Bicholim, and Sattari talukas were put to great inconvenience. For every single official requirement they had to travel to Mapusa, where their deputy collector was based. For five years they had been trying to have the office of deputy collector transferred from Mapusa to Bicholim. In other words, to shift to Bicholim the same officer who was attending to them in Mapusa. It was seen as an impossibility, like taking water to the horse. The book of rules was read to me: one had to issue notifications and gazette them, and notices

in the press calling for objections and finally fix sittings for their adjudication. I did it my way. I had a Darbar in Bicholim on December 30, 1998. And I assured the people that they would have a deputy-collectorate soon, it would be my New Year gift to them. It would take at least three months to complete the procedures, I was cautioned by the bureaucrats. Was that so?! Again I did it my way... I issued peremptory instructions: hire a truck, take it to Mapusa, load the table, the files, the deputy collector himself if it comes to that, and relocate the lot to Bicholim, where there was a full floor lying vacant. It was done on January 1, 1999! Within 48 hours!

Yet another example. In Sanguem, another underdeveloped *taluka*, where the ambitious Salaulim Irrigation project has its source, the people faced serious difficulties. The distributary networks were incomplete. Why? I inquired. And the answer was that a flange was needed. How much did it cost?, I persisted. And the answer was that it was Rs. 500. I pulled out my purse, took out five hundred rupees and got the engineer to buy it and put it in place. Immediately!

In Chandor seven families came to me. They needed electricity. They had completed all the formalities and paid the prescribed fees, two years back. But no one cared. Why? I asked. The engineer of the Electricity department gave me the reason, "Sir, we need three poles for that". I was aghast. "Do you need American technology for it?" No! In fact there were poles in the warehouse. It was just a matter of transporting them to the site and erecting them. It was done — within a week.

A road costing crores passing through the same village of Chandor, had remained unattended, for all practical purposes abandoned. Why? The works had to be tendered. And so? Notices had to be published. Was that all? Yes, I was told. I ordered that it be done within 24 hours. It was.

The philosophy of my Janata Darbars was proved. We, legislators and bureaucrats, owed our existence to the people. Our power was the power bestowed on us by the people. So, they were our *raison d'être*. We had, therefore, to take government to their doorstep.

And that is the way it will be, if I find myself again in the position I was in for two months and left in disgust at the way the people were being exploited and betrayed.





My Goa

My Goas, really. There were so many of them in my mutation from infancy to adulthood. So many more were added in my years as a student leader, later as a labour leader and then as a politician. After every turn of Goa's evolution new challenges, new problems, often new controversies are born. And new Goas sprout. Some of them, perhaps, are of my making, the result of issues I raised, grievances I articulated. Not all of them were satisfactorily solved — not yet in any case. In the next few pages I'll dwell on the hows and whys. More as a humble serviteur of the people of Navelim and Goa than as a leader, planner or thinker.

And new Goas keep sprouting. Times change. Methods change. Laws that were once ideal become obsolete. Policies get outdated. Computers in my youth were in the realm of science fiction. Now manual typewriters, the latest in office equipment in my childhood, are being junked. And come to think of it, as a student of the *Escola Tecnica* I watched in awe the school clerk type, at the press of a key the letters dropped from the semi-circular cradle on to the paper. Press another key and he changed from smalls to caps and vice-versa. And there was a device to change ribbons, from black to red and back to black. It was pure magic for me. And now all that is obsolete. And with every new Goa, there are new aspirations, too. The old order changes, yes — inexorably. And as a politician it is my job, my duty, to be on my toes, lest, as the line goes, "one good order should corrupt the world." Fighting obsolescence, indeed, is my mission. Sadly, the bugbear of many of my peers.

My Goas and my dreams. The Goa I was born into Really, born to, My Mother's *Mother*, that is the way my Mother saw her land That is the way our ancestors had seen it: *Adimata*, the primal mother, a Goddess, the one who created for us our world. Who gave us the boons that made living a joy. I still remember — and remember with nostalgia, because much of it is no longer there — the Goa of my childhood. Green fields, tall palm trees, mango trees of strong branches, of broad gait, their bows bent with succulent fruits in summer, their cool shade the year round. And the rivers, ever brimming with fish. And perfumed flowers everywhere along my path to school, church or play. And bees and butterflies, all colours of them feasting on their chosen flowers' nectar. The rail line ran by my house. And every summer it brought joyous Goans returning to their land, happy to be, yet again, in the land they loved but that couldn't sustain them. Many were from my own Navelim who would wave to us, signaling that they would detrain, a hop-skip away, at Margao and come to the village as fast as they could. And then came the rains. And back they went, to their exiles, to work and brave drudgery for the next eleven months. We, too, went back to our chores — to school.

Those memories never left me. And they inspired that passionate speech I made in the Goa Assembly, when as a young, first-time MLA, I moved the two bills I cherish as much as my legislative initiatives for Konkani and for Statehood: the Protection of Trees and Protection of Land. I said then, "Goa's then lush green forests, have been changed into bushes and bushes to cactus and cactus to the graveyard of rocks" The lush green hills of my childhood and adolescence, I felt — still feel — must return to our land. And the fulsome limpid rivers. And the wildlife we have scared away from its rightful habitat. If the reality now is that our forest cover has depleted and keeps depleting, each one of us must regret and repent it. But merely beating the breast

won't do. Action is called for. In my own and humble way, I have tried to send this message across in my constituency through a slogan "each one grow one" for the annual Vanamahatsova Day. Every year I supply free saplings of trees and fertilizers to my constituents.

Goa, I never tire of saying like most good Goans, is great. Always was. Except that, now that we have bridged most rivers, and cut roads across hills, wastelands and forests, it is much smaller than it was in my childhood. It was very, very big then. Or, so it seemed in the isolation we then lived in. The distances seemed endless. I remember when a relative married a man from Bardesh, tongues wagged, "Why had she to go all the way to Bardesh? Weren't there enough good young men in our own Salcete?" *Badesa - shen - dilan?* That was the incredulous co-villagers' reactions as they commented on, perhaps unfairly, on the young lady, and for effect they dragged the syllables of Badesa — *Baaadesaaa* — to make their point: it was a strange and far away land, a whole culture away. And in the harsh and guttural phonetics of the Konkani spoken in her husband's native world, the hapless *Shastikan* from our part of the world, was a freak. Her singsong Salcetan Konkani was mimicked and mocked, her cuisine was described as strange, her tastes extravagant.

In a way, indeed, Salcete and Bardesh were poles apart. The Franciscans had evangelized in Bardesh, the Jesuits in Salcete. They always kept a good table, those Jesuits. Not for them the Franciscans' route of penance and austerity to the pleasures of the hereafter.

Yet Bardesh and Salcete are twins of a kind. Four times or more, they came to the Portuguese, and as many times were they taken back from the Portuguese, either by virtue of treaties of convenience or after bitter battle. On one occasion, in February 1510, when Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa for the first time, the lands of Bardesh

and Salcete had been leased to Thimaya, the Timoja of Portuguese history, a corsair from Karnataka who had goaded Albuquerque to take Goa from the Sultan of Bijapur. Goa then comprised besides the *Ilha de Goa* (Teeswadi), the lands of Bardesh, Salcete, Ponda, including Belgaum, for which Thimaya was to pay 60,000 *pardaus* of gold, apart from binding himself to defray all expenses and these included those of defence in case of war. Then, the Portuguese lost Goa back to Bijapur, only to take it, once again, on November 25, 1510. And Madhav Rao was granted the *tanadorias* for 52, 000 *pardaus*. He had a personal army of 5, 000 men. Off again and on again, strife continued till May 1539. On January 23 of that year the Marathas occupied Margao and the fort on the mount where now stands the chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade, but the Marathas were beaten back on May 2 of the same year.

Thus, then, was Salcete shaped, in times of peace, between bouts of war.

It was a man from Navelim, Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes, the greatest of all Goans and the most intrepid of its patriots, who set the agenda for Goa. Another great son of Navelim, Cardinal Valerian Gracias, had set the agenda for the Church. The Church couldn't, any longer, he argued, be the handmaiden of colonial oppressors.

That is yet another of my many Goas: Goa, the cradle of intelligentsia. Beyond our own Navelim, besides the great giants I just named, several others, in whatever field of human endeavour: pure science to pure artistry, whether they devoted themselves to fine arts, music, or what we, Goans, relish best: good food, did Goa proud.

In their introduction to the Commemorative Volume brought out by the Goan community of Bombay to celebrate the first centenary of

Dr. Gomes' birth on May 31, 1829 at Navelim, Professors Correia Fernandes and Armando Menezes, both distinguished Goans themselves, describe him as blessed with "patriotic candour". He was "the beacon of his race". He "poured his indignation in noble and passionate words" in his interventions in the Portuguese parliament where he represented Goa with great distinction. He wanted freedom for Goa. The ministers, in Portugal, "at times paid more attention to the designs of colonial uniforms than to the pattern of colonial administration". Politics was "neither an art nor a science". It rather was "a dodge, often a dirty game". It elevated only to corrupt, created idols with feet of clay, turned honest and independent men into venal slaves. But politics also was "reason, morality and virtue" and they "were the Pishah from whose eminence he saw the vision of liberty".

The other great son of Navelim, Cardinal Valerian Gracias, actively participated in the cause of Goa's freedom. The clergy were then seen as the meek agents of our erstwhile colonial rulers. Cardinal Gracias proved by his words and deeds that one could be an exemplary priest and, at the same time, have the courage to stand for Goa's right to freedom. Other priests, like those involved in the Pinto Revolt of 1787, some of whom paid with their lives the price of their ideals, had, likewise, proved much earlier, that the Goan clergy was second to none in their quest for dignity, liberty and equality. Their movement for a free Goa had preceded by seventy years the Indian Mutiny and by 155 years, Mahatma Gandhi's historic Quit India Call. One could go on and on, recalling other great Goans, like Fr. Matheus Crasto, of Divar, Abé Faria, of Candolim, T B Cunha, Fanchu Loyola ...

Francisco Luis Gomes wanted to raise the economic standards of the land of his birth, so that it could sustain itself, it could be free and rise tall on its own two feet. He, personally, was born to wealth and comfort. But there were the toiling masses. And they had to be lifted

to the levels they deserved.

Cardinal Gracias' was a somewhat different story. He had experienced in his childhood deprivation. His mother had the courage to incite him to great heights of achievement. And to my mother, Dr. Gomes and Cardinal Gracias epitomized virtue. I needn't go far, she said in her own incisive way, I needn't go beyond our own Navelim to find my role-models and shape myself. Two sides of the same coin perhaps, but great men, great achievers. Great masters at whose feet I could learn all I needed to. The great ambitions any good mother has for her son...

We are free today. We now are a full-fledged state of the Union of India, the 25th, in area one of the smallest, but in fame and prestige the most well known in India and abroad. Our Konkani is now the official language of the State.

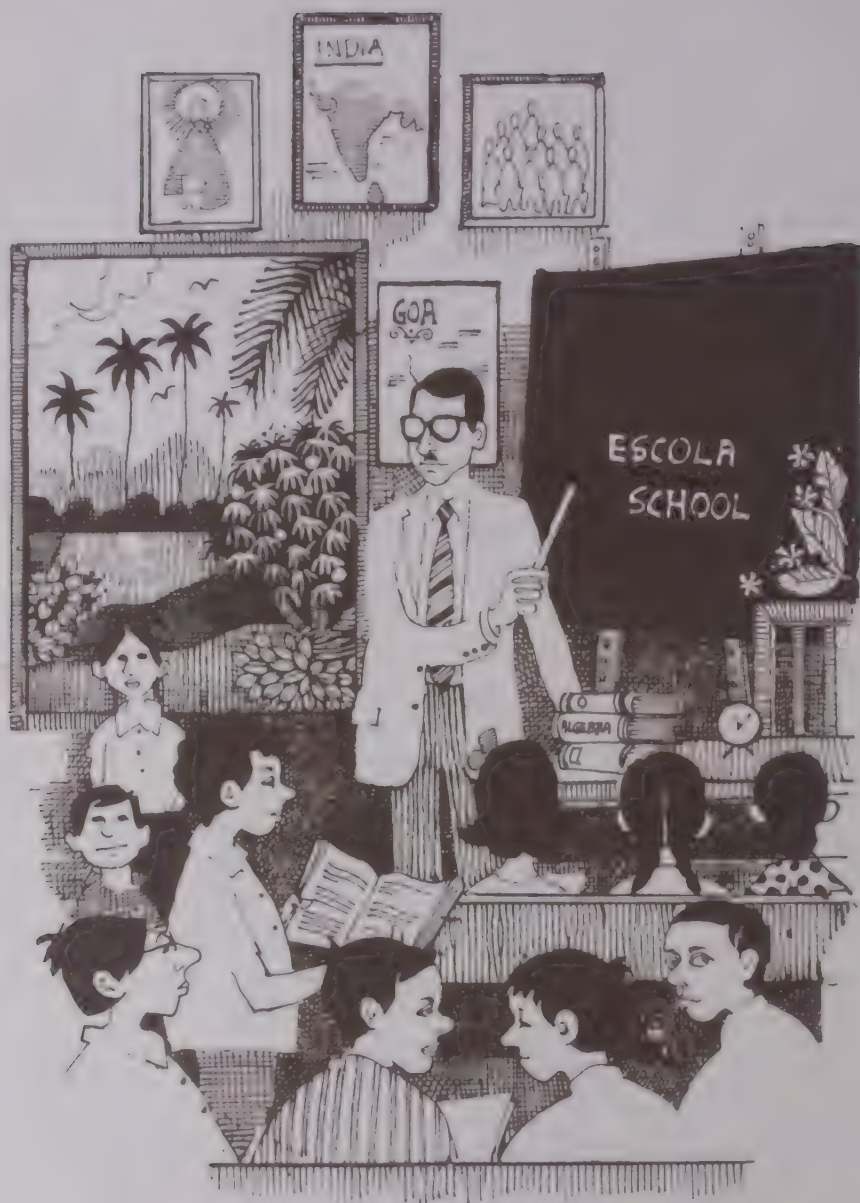
It is a matter of personal satisfaction and pride that I, a humble co-villager of the great Cardinal Gracias, and the even greater Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes, was, in a significant way, responsible for the success of two of liberated Goa's most memorable campaigns to assert its identity — Statehood and recognition of Konkani as our official language.

Like Cardinal Gracias, and unlike Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes, I was not born to wealth. Reverend Sydney Smith, an English churchman, essayist and wit, who wrote *Letters of Peter Pymley* in defence of Catholic emancipation, left behind this gem of wisdom: "Poverty is no disgrace to a man, but it is confoundedly inconvenient." How very true! Yet, it could — and in my case it did — spur one to take on the high and mighty and fight for the rights of the poor and the disadvantaged.

"To wipe every tear", that is the goal Mahatma Gandhi, the Father

of the Nation, had set himself. That, indeed, ought to be the objective of those of us who the people have elected to represent them in the legislatures and voice their aspirations. In my small way, that is what I have been trying to do for Navelim Constituency and, in a larger perspective, for this precious and most loved Goa of ours. In some ways, I succeeded, in some I haven't — at least not as yet.





Years of Apprenticeship

My apprenticeship in public life began, as much else in my experience, very early. So did the instinct to have, at all times, my ear firmly to the ground. Here, I was a lad hardly ten, brought up in the belief that between God in Heaven and Salazar on earth, we, in the *Estado Portugues da India* had all that we needed to peacefully transit from this "vale of tears" to the joys of the hereafter. And one fine day the *raan gaddes* had turned turtle our small world. Suddenly, we woke up to a new order: of freedom and equality. Till then, power had been a creature of wealth and wealth a consequence of power. Resignation had been the virtue the poor must never deviate from. Obedience was their inescapable duty. If any hopes they nursed, they better be patient. Those were the norms.

Three feet nothing as I then was, it was difficult for me to fully comprehend what was in store for me. The Portuguese had gone and now we had to learn English. Many of our teachers found the transition difficult. We would see them groping for words to translate into English their thoughts in Portuguese. It was in their difficulties and ours that an enduring bond was forged. We sought to make things for them as simple as they, in turn, strove to make it for us. Which is how and why I still fondly remember every teacher of mine, every friend and colleague of those insecure and traumatic years.

By then I was already in the *Escola Comercial*, readying myself for the skills I would require to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow. I and some of my colleagues would every morning walk all the way to

our school in Margao. We would walk across harvested paddyfields in the dry season. In the monsoon, the route was more circuitous. But we enjoyed it all the same. There we went chatting and sharing our observations, happy as the birds that overflowed us. Nature was our teacher and inspiration. We could relate cause and effect as accurately as few of our urban colleagues could. It is in those far-off days that my first commitment to environment was made.

It did not take me long to sense that there was scope for much useful activity beyond the covers of my text and exercise books. A whole lot of things had to be done and very much in the manner of my initiatives later in life, I cast myself in the role of an organizer. My colleagues considered me the right student to be the class representative and later General Secretary of the Students Council. Soon, I was better at and more engrossed in extracurricular activities than at the other, more traditional, outlets for a child of my age. Sheer instinct, perhaps, and I was bubbling with ideas. I conceived a wall-paper for the school to articulate our thoughts, not rarely our expectations, a few grievances every now and then. I passed the hat around and we had jolly good picnics. I put up plays, tombola stalls for the feast. We even found ourselves with cash surpluses to help the needy students with uniforms, books and financial assistance.

I wore many hats. I spoke, I debated, I wrote, I sang. I participated in symposiums, All India Radio programmes. I created sub-committees. I assigned tasks. And I issued circulars, all signed with a flourish: **Luizinho Faleiro, General Secretary.**

But never proud, nor arrogant, a bit of a show-off, perhaps. And I was a favourite of the girls in the school in particular — the main vote bank then I was not seen as precocious but my energy and, more than that, my sincerity seemed to impress them a great deal, especially at

the annual social gathering and the school dance.

Then came college. It was a new experience. Suddenly, I felt as free as a bird. The iron discipline of the old days, whether at home or school, was gone. I was living in Panjim, as a boarder of the *Lar Dos Estudantes*, a boarding house created in the Portuguese concept of home, which translates as **lar**, for students.

As ever, eager as a beaver, I went about my campaign for reform. The food was execrable. We deserved better. Not all our methods were diplomatic. But the results were good.

College *per se* was a bore. The textbooks were written by authors who seemed to be least bothered about creating interest in the subjects they dwelt on. Reader-friendly text was not their concern. The lectures were a bore, too. Perhaps my attendance at the college would average a month in a year. And I began to feel quite proud that, in essence, I was a self-taught man. An unbridled horse, yes. But with a sense of direction. And, positively, with no blinkers.

In my third year, the huge Zuari Agro Complex got off the ground. It was Goa's biggest. And one of India's first major multinationals in a core sector. They were paying good money, I was told. And I applied for a job, got it, and earned every month the princely sum of Rs 450. That, in addition to what my mother sent me every month, gave me the airs of a young man of substance. But my poor mother didn't know that I was moon-shinning. When she came to know that I was not concentrating entirely on my studies, she was livid. She sent a messenger to speak to my immediate boss at Zuari, a kindly but competent accountant called Wagle. He was asked by my mother to release me immediately, which he did, half-amused at my prank, half-sorry that he was losing a good worker. After he spoke his last words

as my boss and as I had left his cabin, embarrassed and disappointed, he sent his secretary, a lovely lady, to call me back. "Look", he said "I'll keep the job for you. Answer your exams and come back; you need not wait for the results". And so I did.

Call it regional patriotism at its fullest or what you will. Any one who mattered anything at Zuari was not a Goan. I felt subjugated. But I could also see the other side of my situation. They were employees who had got their jobs because they deserved them. They were highly qualified. They were competent. And diligent. That is what we, Goans, would have to be if we were to *de facto* run our state. Work discipline and work ethics were articles of faith which my mother instilled in me very early in my life. I could now see her logic. Her sagacity. My Zuari experience profoundly restructured my thoughts for Goa. I would later express them in my policy book "Economic Agenda for the decade, Employment for all by 2001". That experience also inspired my campaign, so far not successful, to restructure our education system and make it job-oriented

And so it was that from General Secretary of *Escola de Comercial*, I graduated to General Secretary of Zuari Agro Chemical Union. Not much later, I was the president of another six major unions of Goa, always busy: preparing the charter of demands for one union, simultaneously preparing counter-proposals, counter-demands for the other unions while, at the same time finalising an agreement for yet another union.

It was truly hectic. Hard work, little money, but plenty of satisfaction. The boy who had once wondered why grief and happiness were celebrated in Goa had come a long way. The plunge into politics followed. As on the earlier occasions, of my election as the General Secretary of my *Escola Comercial* and later as the Unionist, the choice

was not really mine. Navelim had been represented by the formidable Dr. A'lvaro Loyolla Furtado, the scion of the legendary Loyollas of Chinchinim and Orlim. When Dr. Furtado had a tiff with Dr. Jack de Sequeira, the UGP fielded, for three elections in a row, Leo Velho. He was a barrister (Lincoln's Inn). And now the UGP had merged in the Congress and the hunt was on for a new face. Someone who, as it was then said, "had it in him". I was the find...

Politics, I soon realised, is one profession which also requires some very special skills. Survival is just one of them. And, no doubt, the most obvious. Also, the most ridiculed. But are somersaults and tricks on the flying trapeze or balancing acts on the high-wire all there is to politics? I believe that there is much more to it. It is, also, if I may speak for myself, about hard work, commitment, sincerity, the will to do things, to make things happen. It is, also, about fair play and courage, the courage to say 'yes' or 'no', no matter what the consequences might be.

When Goa Congress, for reasons that will be soon explained, reunited with the Congress, the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi offered me a choice between a Cabinet position and a key post in the organization. I was the only Goa Congress MLA in the Assembly. All the other candidates had been defeated. Goa Congress had, nevertheless, a sizeable following and I decided I would rather help them in the transition and build new bridges. When, in 1991, the Congress split and the PDF was looking for a credible leader to take over the chief ministership, I said, with no qualms, 'No'. And I have reasons to think that my voters and the people of Goa in general yet again appreciated my stand. I had won the 1980 election by 7715 votes, a large majority in Goan elections where vote banks total just 10 or 12, 000, the next election in 1984 by 9126 votes. In 1990, I was elected unopposed. And in

1995 by a margin of 8178 votes.

There had been disappointments earlier. In my first year as MLA I moved a resolution at the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting on mining rejects, on the way they were ruining ecology and agriculture. I was told that it was a central subject, therefore beyond our competence. My moves to stop forthwith the reckless sand extraction activity on our shores was cold-shouldered with the same excuse. It was "a central subject". It was as if a union territory which we then were, had no competence at all to decide what was best for its people. That, then, had to be my goal: to make Goa a full-fledged State. And that became my passion. One of my most rewarding activities, also. If we were to be a State, we had to campaign for a language of our own. I, therefore, moved the most historical resolution in the history of Goa: to form the Konkani Academy of Goa. And to accord our mother-tongue, Konkani, the status of the Official Language of Goa. In that I was immensely successful. It was approved unanimously. It still is the only unanimous decision of the house.

At a certain stage of my political evolution, I realized that, perhaps, it was time to see politics as a consumer product. The voters' perceptions change, keep changing. A lot of repackaging is called for. One of the most frequently given reasons for the electorate to vote out the party in power or the person who represented them, often for several terms, is that, from time to time, the voter decides to flirt with change. The anti-incumbency vote as psephologists say and the stalwarts who lose console themselves. But the electorate is never seen as flippant. It is always seen as wise and sagacious, as a stern dispenser of justice, even if its choice ultimately proves wrong. The voter is always paramount. So one had to have his sights firmly set, his ear to the ground and an open mind. Which is what I do.

My idea, by no means, is to justify turn-coatism. It is merely an affirmation that, like any other profession, politics has its hazards and its compulsions. Like any human activity, it evolves. And it has its inconsistencies and incongruencies, its inherent contradictions. It is said that, rebuffed by his critics for his not infrequent mood-swings, Nehru once retorted, "Only donkeys are consistent.". Yes... if consistency precludes evolution then it is no virtue .





An Inauspicious Beginning

When Goa was liberated in 1961, a week to Christmas, not many people, in Goa or even in Delhi, had a clear notion about what Goans wanted, what was best for Goa. The elite, embarrassed by its collusion with the colonial regime, shied away from public office and for a while discreetly hibernated. On the other hand, the leaders thrown up by the sudden change, mistook vengeance for vision.

The interim period, of military rule after the ouster of the colonial power and the civilian rule that followed it, was characterized by indecision, delay and favouritism, so typical of bureaucracy. In a classic display of mistrust and arrogance, the administration resorted to a massive induction of "deputationists", bureaucrats imported from the neighbouring states and some from Delhi, who had no clue whatsoever about how Goa was run or should be run. On the other hand, the servants of the former Portuguese administration, Goans all of them, and by and large experienced and knowledgeable, felt bullied and defensively retreated into a shell. The result was catastrophic.

The first few months of the new administration were ominous, with frequent and open feuds at the top level, like the one, to mention the most glaring instance, between Mr. Noronha, a senior ICS officer deputed by Delhi to assist the Military Governor in setting up an ideal transitional administration, and Mr. G.K Handoo, an IPS officer, also from Delhi, with a far from wholesome internal security obsession.

It was presumed, foolishly and with the kind of brashness that comes easily to the unenlightened, that all that was Portuguese was

bad. That lethal approach was followed, even more viciously, by the MGP government that was later elected to power. According to an Arab proverb, when a learned man errs he makes a learned error. Here in Goa, it was unlearned men making unlearned errors. The MGP leadership went to the length of even planning Goa's total obliteration by seeking its merger into Maharashtra. Goans had the courage to resist the move. As we shall soon see, theirs was a magnificent collective reassertion of the millennial values that have given Goa its shape and fame.

MGP's most revolutionary legislative initiative was the restoration of land to the tiller. But it also was its most crass failure. It was an intuitive, indeed a vindictive, piece of legislation. The big landlords got away, but the small ones succumbed to the prevailing government's confiscatory urges. And in the bargain, no emphasis was laid, at any time, either at the conceptual stage or during the implementation, on the prime purpose of a land reform, particularly one so radical: to augment agricultural output.

Land reforms in Goa resulted, largely, in a mere change of land titles, yesterday's tenant becoming, then on, the *de facto* owner. As the years wore on and inflation increased, artisans, farmers and peasants began to look for options outside their traditional occupations. The corollary followed: land remained uncultivated and in course of time were converted to non-agricultural uses. The vacuum left by local artisans was filled by migrant workers with disastrous consequences to the Goan ethos and environment.

The MGP lacked the capacity to draft legislation suited to Goan needs. So they took to copying, mass copying at that, legislation from other states. The trend continues. It is the law of inertia at its worst. Today we have legislations that do not take into account the special

features of Goa.

Even more tragic was the MGP's mistaken notion of development. The first MGP government went on a civil construction spree, putting up in the process ugly buildings, cutting roads through forests and, most disastrously, generating a massive influx of migrant labour that has since snowballed and now accounts for nearly forty per cent of the population.

So innocent was the MGP government about good governance that it took great pride in surrendering, unutilized, the funds placed at its disposal by the Centre, sums of money that, if judiciously used, would have helped Goa in its formative years to prepare itself much better for contingencies like lack of employment, that today plague us. The MGP leaders mistook incompetence for probity.

Indeed, MGP was a born loser even though it was in power for eighteen long and disastrous years. If one were to write an epitaph for that regime it would read something like this. "Here lie the champions of lost causes", because whatever they tried ended in smoke, luckily, in a big way, for Goa. They tried to merge Goa with Maharashtra and failed. They tried to impose Marathi as the Official Language and failed. But they also tried to portray themselves as protectors of poor and the disadvantaged and only ended in creating social chaos and disaster.

The successor administrations created their own Frankensteins and their freaks. We seem to have played the politics of defection to the utter limit. We have had ten Chief Ministers in hardly nine years. And, soon later, three in the same year. Need anything more be said?

Yes, sadly a lot more.

It was the worst guarded secret of the century. Outwardly, Goa

still was the heaven it had been. Of communal harmony. Of civilized acceptance of the right to differ, whether in matters of religion or state. But it was very obvious, and as times went by dangerously so, that each of the two parties, MGP and UGP, contending for power in liberated Goa banked almost entirely on the attraction each of them held for Goa's two main communities: Hindu and Catholic. Various cosmetic initiatives had, of course, been taken. There were Catholics in prominent positions in MGP ranks. Vice versa, there were Hindus in equally high profile situations in the UGP. But the best of make-up melts in the noon heat. Much the same way MGP's melted on assumption of power. The first free election merely affirmed Goa's ethnography. MGP won where the Hindu community was in a majority. And their partisans were disciplined enough to vote, unreservedly, even for the Catholic candidates who had been put up by the leadership. *Mutatis mutandis*, that is how UGP won in its strongholds. And that is how, too, MGP won overall.

Then followed the blinkered vision of bigotry. The constituencies that had voted for UGP were condemned to stagnation. This became painfully clear to me when I became the MLA for Navelim in 1980. For four times in a row Navelim had voted for UGP. The first time it had sent to the Assembly, Dr. A'lvoro Loyolla Furtado, a very popular and respected physician, the heir to the Loyolla lore, a formidable heritage of culture, social work, uprightness and political courage. Then, when Dr. Loyolla Furtado parted company with Dr. Jack de Sequeira on a matter of principle, UGP fielded Leo Velho, a son of the soil who had studied in London and was a barrister. I was elected on the Congress ticket after the UGP's merger with it.

And what did I find? No roads, no water supply. Healthcare was primitive. The panchayats had been systematically denied funds for development. The villages and the villagers falling within the Navelim

constituency were oppressed, suppressed and neglected. The people had forgotten that there was a democratically elected government in Goa. The economy was basically a money-order economy, as every third house was depending on the earnings of a member of family working abroad.

Navelim constituency then comprised the village panchayats of Telaulim, Navelim, Davorlim, Aquem Baixo, Dramapur, Sirlim and the following segments from the Margao municipality: Mungul Madel, Chandrawado, Ambaji, Gogol, Aquem Alto and the Housing Board Colony. When the constituency was re-delimited in 1988, the villages of Carmona, Varca, Orlim and Cavellossim were added to Navelim and five municipal wards, besides Dramapur and Sirlim, were taken away from it.

To my amazement, I discovered economic backwardness in Orlim, a village that is justly proud of its glorious past — their church of St. Michael, erected in 1568, is the oldest in the whole of Salcete. Orlim had been punished by the MGP dispensation as had been the other segments of Navelim constituency, the old and the new, because they were predominantly Catholic areas. It didn't strike the leaders of the MGP that Christianity had been foisted in those areas because the original Hindu population, either through fear or conviction, had accepted the faith. Neither did it strike them that, had not the Portuguese ardour and energy faded away, the fate of the other Goan villages might have been no different from Orlim's or any other village with a similar ethnic profile. And most cynically, it didn't strike the party that large segments of the constituency consisted of backward and disadvantaged communities, like the gauddas, for whose upliftment the MGP had pledged itself. But weren't they Catholics, too? That, it seems, was what was held against them. And as a result Orlim did not have a single

square inch of a tarred road after nearly thirty years of liberation of Goa except the one constructed by the Portuguese, from Margao to Cavelossim. Nor did Orlim have even a foot of pipeline laid.

I had my job cut out for me. I had to rectify the neglect and the inequity. My agenda was, in a way, set by the UGP regime ousted by the Congress in 1980. It was no easy task. But now the forces of communalism had been vanquished. And Goa began to be seen in its totality.

Did I succeed? If public response should be the yardstick, then, perhaps, I will be justified in presuming that my constituents certainly appreciate the sincerity and the direction of my effort. I know only too well that much remains to be done. More, in many ways, than what has been achieved. Not merely in Navelim, but elsewhere in Goa, too.

But there are moments I cannot forget. My constituents decided in 1994 that they would celebrate my birthday, on August 28, in a special way. Goa had been going through a very murky patch in its political history. Between 1991 and 1994, Goa had seven chief ministers, a chief minister was disqualified by the courts, two others dismissed by the Governor. A Speaker had been voted out. The Congress had split, lost its majority, then regrouped and was back in power. There was a spate of disqualification cases, some of them decided by the Speakers, some reversed by the Courts. Every political party in Goa was in a shambles. And so was Goa's political scenario. There had been nothing as bleak and as depressive in Goa, not even at the height of the Black Legend of the Portuguese. Of pelf and perfidy we had in abundance.

Tears seldom come to the eyes of people in public life, used as they are to seeing sorrow and strife. But, truly, tears welled in my eyes when I saw the citizens of Navelim Constituency braving heavy rains

on that August 28 of 1994 and standing in ankle-deep water to convey to me their good wishes and support. Indeed, they are my strength. They were — and remain — my true leaders, the ones who guide my thoughts and inspire my actions.

Their presence on that day was memorable. And I will always treasure the love and affection they showed on that day and in fact all along the past few years I have had the privilege of representing them in the Goa Legislature Assembly. They know as well as I that politics is no longer a simple game. It is no longer the clean game it once was.

But there seems to be a hoodoo hovering over Navelim and those who wish it well and want to do their best for it. The greatest son of Navelim, and indeed of Goa, Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes, never made it back to his beloved *aldeia natal*, the village where he was born. He died on board the ship that was bringing him back from Europe and had to be laid to rest in the waters of the sea. Another great son of Navelim, Cardinal Valerian Gracias ought, as a matter of right, to have presided over the Archdiocese of Goa. He was kept out and away, because of the murky policies of the Padroado, the episcopal jurisdiction created to help the Portuguese to colonize Asia, that, somehow, has outlived the Portuguese.

And I rose to be Goa's Chief Minister, but decided I would rather climb down than carry on and succumb to the pressures, everyday, every minute of it, from colleagues in government who haggled for more power and more personal benefits.



Baptism By Fire

Of several quotes of Alexander Pope, the poet satirist of the eighteenth century, the one perhaps most relevant to the profession of politics which I entered almost reluctantly and from which I now see no exit and the one that certainly had impressed me most in my days of law college, is the one I now recall from memory: "For forms of government let fools contest; whatever is best administered is best".

I have no illusions about it, after all these nineteen years in this generally exciting but not unseldom agonizing "art of the possible". Neither do I have any doubts, that cynical as it, no doubt, is, there are no permanent friends and no permanent foes in politics, there being only permanent interests. It is a tough profession. Hard as nails, someone said; arguable as that may be, it certainly calls for alertness and razor-sharp reactions.

Yes, it is a hard, bumpy road. There is little room for regret or remorse. But introspection is always of great help. One is always focused on the present, because it matters most. And human memory being fickle, the good work done is not always reckoned the way it might have been. Gratitude, as we all know, is the least permanent of human virtues. And to add to the difficulties of politicians the future always is agonizingly unpredictable.

Take the case of Dayanand Bandodkar who, whatever his faults and limitations, meant well and did his best, the way he saw it, for Goa, a land he loved but which had been none-too-kind to him in his

infancy and even early adulthood. Or take the case of Dr. Jack de Sequeira, whose flaws are still remembered and harshly castigated by even some of his one-time lieutenants. But his biggest contribution, the fight for Goa's separate individuality, went unacknowledged and unrewarded till 1994 when his portrait was, at long last, installed in the Goa Legislative Assembly.

Even almost thirty years after the historic Opinion Poll, the great event of the time, in fact the most important landmark of the post-Portuguese history of Goa, the citizenry had tended to forget it. The focus changed to Goa's struggle for the recognition of Konkani as the official language and the granting of Statehood, as full-fledged member of the Union of India. Those were — and remain — liberated Goa's most important achievements.

Laudable achievements they, no doubt, were, but neither would have been possible had not our elders, men and women now in their 50s and 80s, sought so tenaciously and courageously to maintain Goa's identity and win for themselves and their children and their children's children the battle of the Opinion Poll, led from the front by Dr. Jack de Sequeira.

A brief recollection will be in order. Speaking on the Bill to amend the Constitution, the Constitution Amendment (12th Amendment) Bill, to include Goa, Daman and Diu in Schedule I of the Constitution as Union Territory, Prime Minister Pandit Nehru had said, "We have made it clear that we want Goa to maintain its separate identity, separate individuality, call it what you will, because in the space of 400 years Goa has had a separate identity and the course of history had imparted it some ... In fact, some people have advised us to make another change in the Constitution and to recognize the Konkani language as one of the official languages of India". Later, the Congress party manifesto for

free Goa's first election, was perhaps unadvisedly ambiguous and left the question of Goa's constitutional status — "whether it should merge with Maharashtra" — to the "wishes of the people". Congress Party stalwarts from Maharashtra, like Y. B. Chavan and V.P. Naik, were less ambiguous. They demanded Goa's immediate merger, as a matter of right. MGP advanced a strange theory, which was promptly lapped up by their Maharashtra godfathers: they had won the 1963 election, they were for merger; therefore, the people of Goa were for merger. The MGP in fact passed a private member's resolution in the Assembly, on January 22, 1965, demanding the merger and provided grist for Maharashtra's expansionist designs. The struggle for Goa's preservation as a separate constitutional entity was, in many ways, a roller-coaster, games of political convenience at times overshadowing conviction and almost negating the firm pledge given by Pandit Nehru. Thankfully, reason prevailed and on January 16, 1967 the Opinion Poll was held. Goa, the true Goans, won so convincingly that a chastised MGP finally gave up its suicidal urge to liquidate our millennial identity and reduce Goa to a taluka of the then South Konkan district of Ratnagiri.

When I entered politics in 1980, the UGP had all but disappeared. In 1977, the Santa Cruz constituency had remorselessly voted against Dr. Sequeira. It had stood by him that far steadfastly, at its own cost as it were, because the MGP government, revanchist to the core, had blocked its development by all means at its disposal. But now, its mood had changed. Dr. Sequeira presumably had failed to realize that Santa Cruz and the other once minority constituencies now saw themselves in a different perspective. They hungered to be participants now in a much larger political scenario. Regionalism had led them nowhere, except to a kind of martyrdom. A party, national and secular by definition and proven by its actions, was the need of the moment. Mrs. Gandhi had proposed an alliance, if not an outright merger. It had

eventually happened in its own way, on its own dynamics.

But old images remained in my mind. And in my heart as well. The days when we, I and my friends, went about doing all kinds of jobs allotted to us during the election campaigns, putting up banners, pasting posters, lining the streets, sky-blue paper flags in our hands, waving them high and enthusiastically when the leaders and the candidates came to address their electorate. My mother spent sleepless nights at her manual sewing machine, after her daily chores were done with, making banners and flags. We were all working for a cause, the cause of free Goa.

We had won the Opinion Poll, but the risks had by no means vanished. Or even diminished. A new Poll might well be manipulated. And the results could be reversed. There was no dearth of powerful politicians in the Congress itself who, being aggressive Maharashtrians themselves, supported, encouraged and abetted Maharashtrian expansionism.

I had my agenda well set in January 1980, on the very day I was sworn in as an MLA for the first time; it was bliss, absolute and perfect. But beneath, trouble had been brewing all the time. Babu Naik and Dr. Wilfred de Souza had, apparently, buried the hatchet and sunk their differences. They seemed to have tamed their not inconsiderable egos. But only for a while, as it turned out. They had, it seems, only agreed to disagree, and had, for the sake of form, signed and sealed a compromise, ideal in a way but unworkable in several senses. They had given up their individual and fierce claims for the chiefministership. But in their hearts they remained foes. Each one of them continued to see himself as the prophet of Goa's political salvation. Inevitably, one aspired to eliminate the other at the nearest turn of the road.

A 'brainwave', that is how each one of them had seen it, inspired them to cast themselves in the unfolding political drama as ascetic recluses. And they draped the mantle of power around the shoulders of Pratapsing Rane, a former MGP MLA and minister, who had left Shashikala Kakodkar's company. It was as good an arrangement for the party and for Goa as anyone could think of.

But the two gladiators, Babu and Dr. Willy, while making grand public statements and assuming impressive public postures of reconciliation and commonality of purposes and interests, while anointing Rane, had their own personal agenda. Each one of them had presumed, fatally mistaken as events proved, that Rane would be malleable. They hoped to mould and manoeuvre him. However, soon they realized that their calculations had misfired. That Rane was and would remain his own man. The old Babu-Willy rivalries were soon resuscitated. It was now a fight to the finish.

Mrs. Gandhi thought that one way out might be to get them to join the cabinet. There had been rumours that not all the cabinet ministers were performing to expectations, particularly in terms of probity and fairplay. Resignations were sought ostensibly to correct deviant behaviour. But, in fact, it was done so that Babu and Willy could be inducted into the cabinet. Jumbo-size cabinets were not the fashion — not yet. They would soon become so.

By 1983, the Congress in Goa had proved that it needed no Opposition in the Assembly. It was quite capable of wrecking itself all on its own. By August that year, with the CHOGM Retreat only a few months away — an international event and image-building opportunity Mrs. Gandhi had set her mind on — Mrs. Gandhi decided that the abscess growing in her party in Goa had to be lanced before it festered much more. By then, Dr. Willy had openly pitted himself against Rane.

He had now undisguisedly staked his claim to the leadership of the government. He felt he had the majority with him. I, too, shared that perception. I, too, thought that communalism had really not been extirpated from Goa's body politic. It was there, very much there. Whatever his limitations, Dr. Willy, to my mind, had a major role in bringing into the Congress the UGP masses. He deserved recognition and reward. Delhi deputed to Goa one of its then stalwarts, Mr. H. K. L. Bhagat, to solve the impasse, amicably if possible, if not by an open contest for leadership between Rane, the incumbent, and Dr. Willy, the aspirant.

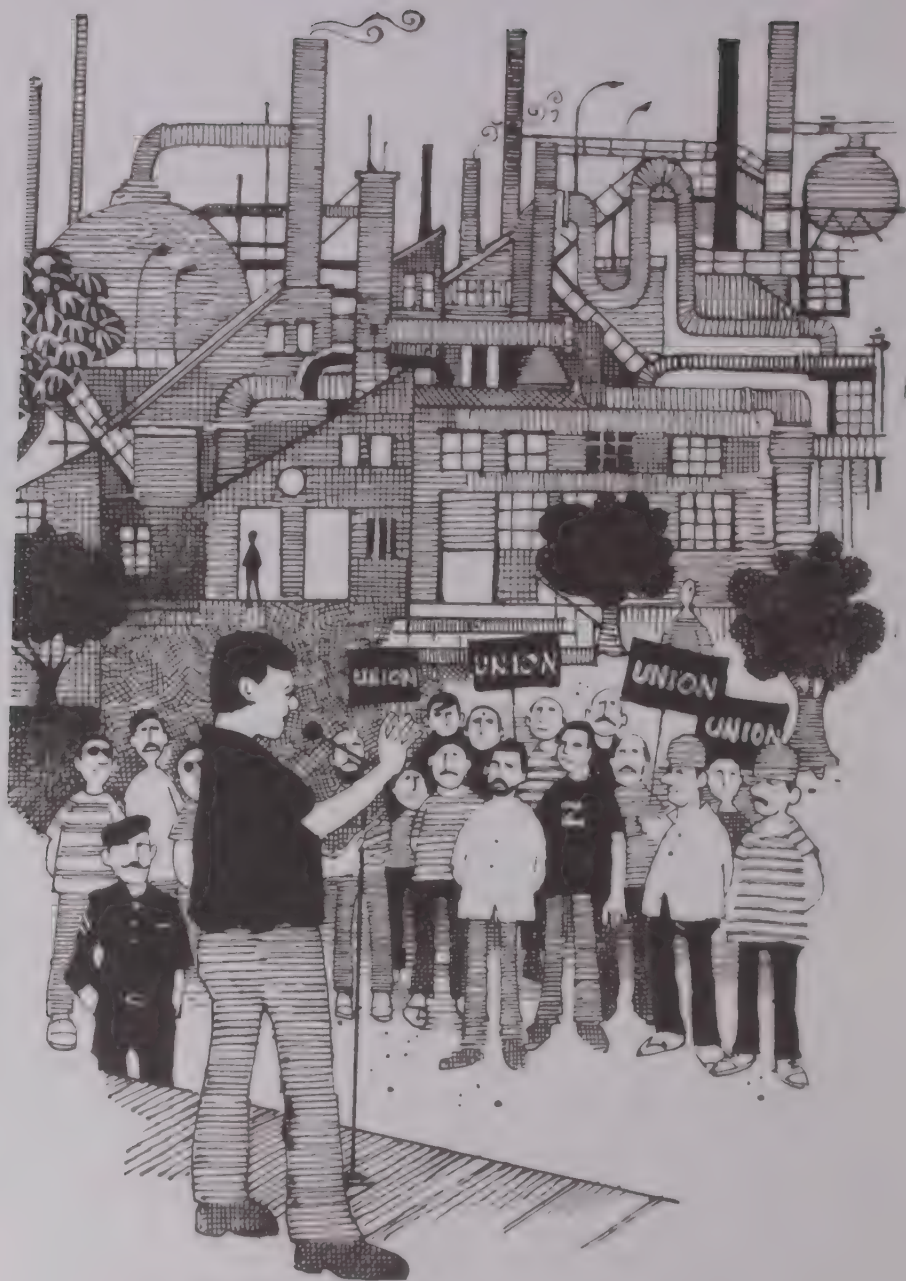
Power has its compulsions. Some of the MLAs Dr. Willy had relied and counted on, deserted him with no compunction. Decency demanded that I continue to be loyal to him. I did. But Rane was confirmed in his post. We, just about a dozen MLAs, decided to leave the party. We thought we would float a new party, *Goa Congress*. We did. That was not the end of the battles for leadership. They went on. Soon, Babu turned against Rane.

But our calculations went tragically awry in the elections that followed, in 1984. Statistically, we hadn't fared too badly. We had polled 18 per cent of the total votes. But in terms of seats, and that is all that mattered, Goa Congress had been soundly trounced. Except in Navelim, which I had represented and happily continue to represent, all the Goa Congress candidates had lost, many even forfeited their security deposits. And, to our agony, that had been the fate of Dr. Willy de Souza himself. It looked as if I was the only Goa Congress candidate acceptable to the electorate. In fact, call it poetic justice if you will, I polled the highest number of votes in that election. Even though I was not in power. Even though I was only a second-term aspirant. It seemed to me then that by returning me so wholeheartedly,

Navelim constituency was endorsing my work for them and goading me to greater goals in politics, for their own good and for the good of Goa.

The Bible speaks of triumph in defeat. That, in a way, was my case. My political stature grew immensely as a result of my victory against all odds. I was grateful that my work for my constituents had been acknowledged, appreciated and generously rewarded. I was now on, if I may be less than modest, a political leader in my own right. The stature didn't go unnoticed as I received the message to rejoin Congress and also the cabinet. I decided that I shouldn't. That I mustn't. I was, in my mind, still a Goa Congress MLA, and the fact that I was the only MLA of that party in the Assembly had cast on me a greater and heavier responsibility. If I deserted it, I would betray my own trust in myself. A ministership was not the ultimate end. At my age, 33, I could well bide my time. All I had to do was to continue to work for my constituents, for my Goa. A ministership was not, after all, such an irresistible temptation. Maybe, I secretly said to myself, with the insouciance so characteristic of the young, that there could be greater things in store for me.





At The Crossroads

Here I was, at the end of 1984, when the election results were declared, a lone wolf from a pack that had been all but decimated. Here was a young man whose thoughts constantly centred around Goa, even from his teen years. Now when I review my actions and initiatives of those days, I realize that the touch of overconfidence of those days was, perhaps an indicator of the intensity of my enthusiasm. Things had to be done and, in fact, were long overdue. My rebellion was against the lethargy and indifference of the very people who were the victims of the inertia and inequity of the powers-that-be. But loneliness was not new to me. I had come up the hard way, often against heavy odds. I remember setting myself an almost impossible agenda in my college days. I needed a degree to get a job. But there was little to enthuse any sensible young man or one with an imagination as fertile as mine. Lectures, as I said earlier, were a bore, the books written in a stodgy, pedantic style, more as an outlet for the author's ego than as an invitation to learn. The extracurricular activities, on the other hand, were my big passion, because in them and through them I could act unhindered and prove myself. Job satisfaction was more important. The degree would come any way, if I passed the exams. And to pass the exams mugging eighteen hours a day a fortnight or two before the exams was all that was required. At least, that was my experience.

We know, by now, that I tried and failed to work and study at the same time but even at the risk of repetition, I will recall the circumstances. The main consideration was that I needed money. And

badly. My mother gave me as much as she could, but that, sadly, was hardly sufficient. So, as the reader knows, I had got myself a job. Zuari Agro Chemicals had started operations and needed hands in their accounts department. With a BCom degree in my hands and my self-propelling style, it was not difficult to get a job. But that was only one part of it. Because, unlike other youth of my time with comparable weak economic backgrounds, I could not go and tell my mother that I had got myself a reasonably good job and could now give up studies. That would break her heart. A BCom degree was just nothing so far as she was concerned. She wanted me to amass knowledge, not the few coppers that clerks earned at that time. She had bigger dreams for herself and me. My day-to-day schedule was an ordeal. I had to be regular in my attendance at my place of work. I also had to keep terms for my MCom degree and as if that wasn't enough, I had managed to get a law degree, going all the way to Belgaum. There were no Law colleges in Goa then. And more. I had to keep secret from my mother that I was already earning my keep.

In my Zuari Agro days, I would never take no for an answer, particularly if I felt that my cause was right. And generally that, indeed, was the case. Mention was made earlier on how I was catapulted from the leadership of the union at my workplace to an all-Goa canvas. "Nothing doing, let us start a struggle". That had been my motto. And now, as a lone Goa Congress MLA, that had to be my struggle. Never compromise.

The Opinion Poll, I felt, had been the beginning of Goans' struggle to maintain their identity and have it respected. In my view and in the view of all self-respecting Goans, the gains of the Opinion Poll had to be consolidated. Konkani had to be recognized as our Official Language. Goa had to be given the status of a full-fledged State of the Union. It

could not remain any longer a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly with limited powers, with a Government which, for all purposes, was accountable to a Lt. Governor whose Secretary participated in and monitored Cabinet meetings.

I tried — but to my luck, failed — to raise the question of Goa's twin aspirations in the various fora of the party. To my mind, the MGP sword was still hanging over our heads. Their logic had been that Marathi is the language of Goa, and, therefore, Goa is a part of Maharashtra. This mischief had to be settled once and for all, through constitutional provisions.

I have stated it before, but it needs be placed in context. I, therefore, tabled a resolution in the Goa Assembly on March 31, 1982, that Konkani is the mother-tongue of Goans and, therefore, should be declared the Official Language. Hence, also, a Konkani Academy should be created to develop the language. It was a historic resolution in the sense that it was for the first time that such a resolution had been moved and unanimously approved, irrespective of party affiliations or ideologies of the MLAs.

I followed up that initiative with another resolution, on January 14, 1983, urging the Government of India to grant statehood to Goa and fulfill the long-cherished dreams of Goans. It was another historic resolution, passed unanimously by the House. But the aspirations had, nevertheless, remained a distant dream. That was, I decided, a battle I must wage again, without letting up. If I had to do it alone, so be it.

There were other thoughts burning in my mind. As a child, going to Margao to my *Escola Comercial* was such a pleasure. My companions and I would, with no fuss at all wake up at six, never later than 6.30. By seven, we were, on the road. We cut across lush green fields. And

even when my mother bought me a bicycle, the route was sheer poetry, through well-built roads, shaded by trees, under which one could rest, if out of breath.

My mother's ambitions for me knew no limits. She also wanted me to learn music. The violin was her favourite instrument and she fancied me mastering it. But that, sadly, was not to be, despite all the valiant efforts of Maestro Camilo Xavier, the committed and inspired director of *Escola de Musica*, in the Margao Church Square, a floor above the coffin shops of two rival undertakers. The square was a thing of beauty. And now, the once green fields had sprouted hideous buildings, the trees had been felled to widen the road.

That, I decided, was another area I could — indeed, should — concentrate on, lone wolf or not. And, I am proud to say, I did it to the best of my ability and so we have the Conservation of Trees Act in Goa.

There were other problems nagging my mind and spurning me to action. "Who," I had been asking myself in 1980 when I entered the Legislative Assembly for the first time, "would redeem Goa from the disastrous effects of the well-intentioned but hopelessly misdirected and tragically executed MGP policies between 1963 and 1979, when Mrs. Shashikala Kakodkar was ousted from power?"

The Congress had won the 1980 election and come to power, for the first time — something the party had failed to achieve earlier. At the local level, too, several Congress leaders who had participated in Goa's freedom struggle, had staked their claim, just and legitimate in their view, to lead the territory they had helped liberate into a new era, to new vistas of material and social justice. But they had failed. So fluent had the Congress victory been that even MGP stalwarts like

Mrs. Kakodkar herself, deserted their sinking ship and joined the treasury benches giving the Congress the unprecedented and never again matched record: 28 MLAs in a House of 30.

I had the equanimity to realize that the real catalysts of that great Goan transition, from darkness to light, were not the politicians who, as ever, found themselves in the limelight and have since done their best to stay in power. The real agents of change were the voters, the humble and the anonymous voters, the men and the women of Goa who suffer in body and soul the consequences of maladministration, of nepotism, of corruption, of injustice, of the insensitiveness of politicians who, once in power, tend to forget the cause they championed and the people who stood by them when the going was bad. But much still remained to be done. Some of it, because of internecine feuds in the party, both at the organization and legislative levels.

And what could I do for the voters? For the unemployed? For those who, like the backward communities, had suffered the indignities heaped on them by one regime after another? To improve agriculture? To set up new industries? For the aged and the infirm? To expedite justice? It didn't take me long to reset my agenda. But it was no easy task. If the Congress with a strength of 28 in an assembly of 30 had failed, because dissension had blighted the programmes and impeded their execution, would I make any contribution single-handed? I thought I might try. That was the least I could do. And so during my tenure I was able to launch some of my most hard-fought campaigns, such as:

- for Konkani;
- for Statehood;
- for prevention of corruption by public persons;
- for protection of Goa's environment;
- for the welfare of the aged and disabled;
- for the welfare of the Other Backward Class

- for promotion of technical education.

With the same fervour I launched the following policy documents before the people of Goa.

- Economic Agenda, Employment for all by 2001 AD
- Houses for all by 2001 AD
- Information Technology Policy

But, principally, I had to remain well focused on Goa's twin and still unachieved aspirations: Konkani and Statehood. I interacted with Konkani lovers, writers, thinkers, playwrights, actors. The Konkani movement was, in fact, the one mission Goa Congress could — and I am glad to state, indeed did — make its goal. Enthusiastically! We braved the resistance of the then ruling Congress party. And, not too rarely, the fury of the mobsters set on us by vested interests. Even taking on in our stride the cops who tried, but failed, to break our resolve with their cannisters of tear gas and at times firing bullets, on the committed and enthusiastic supporters of the movement.

My latest contribution to Goa is the Information Technology Policy which I finalized and dedicated to the Youth of Goa, hardly a week before I laid down office. I was working on an Education Policy for the State, to make education more purposeful, more job-oriented. And I was also working on a new Tourism Policy, for the lack of which, tourism, our most important industry right now, seems to be floundering.

The Information Technology Policy of Goa is designed to take Goa into the next millennium by emphasizing frontiers of new technology. Information Technology revolution is changing the way we perceive the world, demolishing boundaries, spaces, reducing communication time and re-defining the structure of economic systems and human relations. The changes that are taking place globally will affect every corner of the world.

Goa has achieved a high level of socio-economic performance and is set to leap into the Information Technology Age. Our high human resource indicators, high per capita income, clean environment, good quality of life and good infrastructure - all make Goa an exciting destination not only for tourism but also for Information Technology. The Information Technology Policy brought out by me is a statement of the potential and objectives of the State.

Through this Policy, we set up an Information Technology Council for Goa to co-ordinate future development. A Software Technology Park is already functioning in the State. A Software Technology Parks Authority is also set up to facilitate entrepreneurs investing in the State. A High-Tech Habitat is proposed as outlined in the Action Plan of the Government of India. A Department of Information Technology and Human Resource Development has also been set up.

There is a determination to move forward with a well set-out Action Plan to synergise with the Information Technology revolution. The Policy aims to provide the institutional support necessary to ensure that Goa becomes a leading State in the country in Information Technology. I invite all entrepreneurs to take advantage of the facilities my State has to offer.

And here I am at the crossroads again: hoping that the leaders of my Congress Party will, yet again, win the elections, and, principally, hoping that it will field candidates who have an impeccable image, and who will have the vision and the skill to guide Goa out of this millennium into the next.



The Giant Awakens

By 'Giant' I mean Salcete. And for long had it lain in slumber and torpor. One reads in travel tales that wherever one goes in Goa, whatever the direction, miles of scenery, beautiful and unique, unfold before the delighted voyager. Also, never ending miles of history, much of it gory: tales of splendour and greed, pomp and misery, of empires that rose and fell in baffling succession. Tales of cruelty and bravery. Several times was Salcete conquered or, if not, bartered by its rulers in never ending power plays and games of one-upmanship.

Mine is not narrow regional patriotism. I would have worded my thoughts on Salcete even if I were not a Salcetan. Because, indeed, Salcete is at the core of Goa's political, cultural, social and even commercial history. Truly a giant, legendary and inspiring. Not that Bardesh and other areas of Goa haven't their achievements, of which all of us, Goans, are so proud of. In Bardesh was born Abbé Faria, one of the greatest innovators of modern science, what he called *sommeil lucide*, his description of hypnotism, the lucid sleep, which is now a powerful tool availed of by psychiatrists and even obstetricians to induce painless childbirth. And it was in Bardesh that Catholic priests revolted against Portuguese colonialism, in 1787.

But Salcete was where the Goan soul blossomed. The effective phase of Goa's freedom struggle was launched in 1946 at the historic Lohia Maidan, in Margao. The best of Goan prose, poetry, folk songs, theatre originated in Salcete. So did all great movements: for the emancipation of women, for secularism, for eradication of poverty and

disease. It was in Salcete, in Macazana, that the internationally acclaimed scientist, Dr. Froilano de Melo, himself a Salcetan from Benaulim, set up one of Asia's then most modern asylums to treat and rehabilitate leprosy patients. To mention a few of the other cherished areas of Goa's progressive thinking and spectacular achievements, it was in Salcete, in Rachol, that Varde Valaulikar, the great Shenois Goembab, launched his magnificent effort to revive Konkani and enrich its literature. And no single institution in Asia has done as much to spread in the most enlightened fashion the teachings of Christ as the Rachol Seminary.

Yet, it is equally true, that suddenly Salcete withered. Very much like the *rhumbodd*, the mythic Goan plant that once was everyone's joy and then ceased to flower. Salcete, too, had tragically ceased to flower and slowly lapsed into decadence.

And, then, Salcete, the giant, suddenly awakened. It waged a relentless battle for Konkani, our mother-tongue. And for Goan dignity. And so was born the state of Goa with Konkani as its Official Language.

The true history of Salcete, of its miseries and struggles, is yet to be written. We know, because the Portuguese themselves left behind accounts of their deeds and misdeeds. We know how our ancestral lands were confiscated and appropriated by the then powers-that-be. How the Comunidade of Velim was reduced to bankruptcy and then leased out. How, even more savagely, the village of Cuncolim was plundered and pillaged and then gifted away to a Portuguese brigand who had a hand in quelling the locals. They had risen in rebellion against their rulers, both lay and religious, because their excesses had crossed all limits of decency and could not be suffered in silence any more.

But we are yet to be told by the historians of this land of ours how the Liberation of Goa was turned by bigots and mindless apostles of revanchism into an opportunity to victimize and terrorize the people of Salcete. I have mentioned elsewhere how the steadfast support of Salcetans, in constituencies like mine, to the UGP had been severely punished by the ruling MGP. How that party denied Salcetans their legitimate share of the fruits of freedom.

When that chapter of Goa's history is written one will know, in full measure, how Salcete enabled Goa to relaunch itself on a new path, of progress and secularism. Because if Salcete had been, that far, UGP's strongest bastion, it became, soon after, the main plank of secular politics and policies. Salcete was UGP's stock-in-trade when it decided to merge with the Congress and join the mainstream. Without the support of Salcetans, Congress would never have come to power. Nor would Goa's voice matter in the nation's Parliament.

As a Salcetan, I am justifiably proud of the fact that I had a role, a major one, if it is not immodest to speak the truth, in the sublime awakening of that colossal sleeping giant. The street became our arena. The lovers of Konkani the Knights-at-arms, our unbridled enthusiasm the steed that we rode to victory.

I remember those days with tears of happiness. Of the people's support in my struggle for Konkani. I didn't have the slightest doubt, nor did I have any illusions about the gigantic size of the task ahead, and the meagre resources, of manpower and money, at my disposal. The government, though a Congress Government and in principle committed to Goa's twin aspirations, i.e. to obtain for Goa statehood and get Konkani its due place in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution, was not interested in either of the twin aspirations. It feared that statehood would bring to an end the financial bonanza Goa was enjoying

as a Union Territory, as a surrogate of the Central Government. And Konkani? The local government thought that if a dream it was, a nightmare it would soon become. It fantasized scenarios of communal unrest. It dreaded the phantoms of its own creation. It had presumed, with no reason, let it be made clear, that its support to Konkani would unleash a Hindu backlash. Little did it realize that its fate could — as indeed would — be marred if it dithered anymore in the pursuit of Goa's twin aspirations, of Goa's right to honour and dignity.

It was undoubtedly a tough battle. Relentless and absolute. The thinking of the Congress at the national level was a continuation of the Morarji Desai doctrine, though the man was no longer in the party. If Konkaniwadis were appeased, then what about the campaigners for Maithili, Bhojpuri and several other languages and dialects claiming inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution? Would there ever be an end to such demands, thought unreasonable by Morarji, if Goa's was granted? What if the recognition of Konkani as Goa's official language triggered a consequential movement for the granting of statehood? Wouldn't that unleash the divisive forces elsewhere in the country? Would — or could? — Goa ever manage to be financially viable, as, it was then argued, federal states by definition must be? What if Vidharba demanded it be carved out from Maharashtra? Or Jharkhand from Bihar? Or if the Nepalese in Bengal became more militant? Or, likewise, the ethnic groups in the North-East?

That, we argued, was not our concern. We knew our minds and were steadfast in achieving our aims.

At the regional level, the Congress in Goa was a house divided. Many of the leaders had transited to the party from the MGP and they were still true to their first love, in so far as the question of Goa's languages and Goa's constitutional status were concerned. Those in the



Congress who were truly Konkani lovers abounded only in sentiment, but lacked the guts. Wouldn't they transgress the party line if they came out in the open? Wouldn't just their moral support be of use, a kind of moral strength?

"Nothing doing " was our response. Come and join the movement. Resign your ministerships, if you must. Resign your MLAs, resign your positions in the party organizations. It is up to you. But just lip service wouldn't do. Or else, we'll go to your constituents, remind them of your election pledges, of the undying love for Konkani that you had then pledged from the campaign platforms. Legally the electorate may not — yet! — exercise its right to recall. But there were ways it could express its anger. It did!

We had to brace ourselves for battle. We had led the people to a point of no return. It had to be now or never. And here and now it was going to be.

I used whatever fora were available to me: the Legislative Assembly, the media, person-to-person meetings, the public platform. I moved on March 3, 1982, a private member's resolution for the creation of the Konkani Academy. It was unanimously approved. On January 14, 1983, I moved yet another private member's resolution, this one on Statehood. And yet again, it was unanimously passed. Clearly, the man-in-the-street and my peers in the Legislative Assembly were *ad idem*. But one lives and learns. After waiting for things to happen and by now bitter that they didn't, and perhaps wouldn't, I moved one more of my by then relentless private member's bill, the day allotted to such private members' initiatives being Friday, an ominous day if one considers that was the day when Christ was betrayed and crucified. That bill, as the official record shows, was the *Goa, Daman and Diu Official Language Bill of 19 July 1995*. This time the Rane Government

was brazen. It offered no lip sympathy as it had done earlier. My Bill was promptly and summarily thrown out.

Within ten days, on July 29, to be precise, I led a movement of thinkers, writers, poets, dramatists, personalities, and courted arrest. I recall with gratitude the support and participation of my great friend and other *Konkani-mogi*, Konkani lovers, Uday Bhembro, Francisco Monte Cruz, with whom I was to part company on another issue, and Bachico Branco. We courted arrest, followed by 3000 writers, poets, dramatists, intellectuals, thinkers. We were held and marched off to the GRP camp in Panaji's Altinho. A site, sheer coincidence of course, that also houses the Police kennels.

In that strange setting was born one of Goa's most powerful public movements, *Konkani Porjecho Avaz*. We had, wittingly or unwittingly, unleashed a tidal wave. Soon, all hell would break loose. There was no way those in the movement could retract. There was no way, either, for the fence-sitters in the Legislative Assembly and in the Government, to ignore the movement.

We had no money to transport our supporters to the public meetings we organized. Nor would government allow us to freely move them. Buses were stopped en route and impounded if regulation documents, like permits and official clearances, were found amiss. So our instructions were clear. Walk to the venues. This is your movement. If you are living too far, use your cycles, there is no way any one can stop you if you are a multitude. Study your route carefully. Find the short-cuts. Be there, that's what you must do. Just do it.

Then, official repression started. So, we blocked police access. Even children, some of them as old as seven or less, carried stones to

block the roads or then cut trenches across the roads. On, at least one occasion, I was caught in a road block and had to think of ways to regain my mobility. So involved were the people. So fierce their resolve.

There was another battle front opened by government. They arrested demonstrators or whoever in the blinkered view of the authorities were suspect. We couldn't allow them to get away with their strong-arm tactics. So, at any given point of time, there were a dozen or more advocates camping in my Margao house, to file bail applications, appear in the courts and secure the release of those unjustly and wantonly arrested. I recall with great pleasure the immense commitment of the advocates and lawyers who made their legal expertise available, sacrificing their own practice and time, great Konkani lovers all of them.

But we had, nevertheless, moments of anxiety and great pain. Parents, husbands, wives, brothers and sisters, rushed to us to find out the whereabouts of their dear ones. They had not returned home. All kinds of rumours were afloat, as it often happens in such situations. We had doctors with us should need arise. But, sad to say, in seven cases, Floriano Vaz, Cajetan Fernandes, John Fernandes, Joaquim Fernandes, Adrian Afonso, Mathew Gracias and Inacio Gonsalves, we could do nothing but mourn them and praise, in all humility, their bravery. Their heroism! They had risked everything and paid with their lives for a cause that was most dear to them. In many ways, to their death, Konkani, our great language, owes its redemption.

Rajiv Gandhi, the then the Prime Minister of India, understood the intensity of the Goan sentiment and the resoluteness of the masses. Graceful as ever, he conceded it. And made it his gift to Goa on the eve of the Silver Jubilee of Goa's Liberation.

In the run-up to that momentous decision, Rajiv Gandhi had called

the Goa Congress leaders to Delhi. He was, by that single and large-hearted gesture, acknowledging that the party was, after all, a political force to be reckoned with in Goa. Now that the party's main demand had been conceded and the consequent step of Statehood about to be initiated, would we rejoin the mother-party?

Why not, we decided. But we set out our terms. A great charmer, he asked me to decide whether I would prefer to join the Goa Cabinet as a full-fledged minister or take a key organizational post. I had already declined, much earlier, a similar and, as gracious an offer. So, I said, 'No, thank you.' I would rather re-structure the far-from-satisfactory local Congress party. As already stated I had to, also, smoothen the induction of the Goa Congress component into the National Congress, a delicate task. I was thus appointed the General Secretary of the Pradesh Committee. It was tough. I worked as hard as I could, happily for all, producing the expected results. Fresh elections were round the corner; hardly a few weeks away.

But there were creases to iron out. We had to assure an honourable position for the stalwarts of the now defunct Goa Congress. Dr. Willy de Souza had to be shown due respect. Churchill Alemao had slaved for Konkani and Goa Congress. And he had to be assured a ticket for the ensuing elections. There were others like Domnic Fernandes, who equally deserved — and expected — rewards. However, all of them, including Dr. Wilfred de Souza and Churchill Alemao, had lost their earlier elections on the Goa Congress ticket.

Finding the assurance of a Congress party ticket for Churchill proved to be less difficult than fulfilling other terms set forth by Goa Congress. Churchill was accommodated at the expense of the sitting MLA Francisco Monte Cruz. Politics is a strange game, indeed. Not

long ago, Monte Cruz had found his way into politics through Churchill. That was in 1980. When Churchill thought that a ball game is best watched from the side-lines and not from the middle. And now Monte Cruz had to be the sacrificial lamb. Getting Dr. de Souza's terms accepted was a major hurdle. I had many preparatory meetings with Chief Minister Rane, at the Forest Rest House in Valpoi, and in his farm house at Sanquelim. At the final two meetings, these with Dr. de Souza's participation, the terms were settled. Old political allies (1979-80) who had become bitter foes in 1983 were friends again. But were they?

It wasn't the easiest task. I was very much in the situation of the boatman who had to ferry-cross the river the wolf, the lamb and the cabbage. He could not ferry them all together, the boat being small. But neither could he take one at a time and leave the other two on the same bank while he rowed across. Either would the lamb eat the cabbage or the wolf devour the lamb. A lot of ingenuity was needed. And luckily, it was found.

My attitude, right through the struggle, was well-known in my Navelim constituency. I believe in dialogue. And I frequently consulted my constituents. As a result, I won that election uncontested. An uncontested election was a first ever in Goa's parliamentary history. And it has not been repeated so far.

I had, it seems, in my constituents' way of seeing things, and even in the eyes of my would-be rivals, crossed the Rubicon.

Navelim - My Nursery

When I was elected in December 1979, I was young and energetic and was full of dreams, just like any young man anywhere. I was also a very angry man at that time. I was angry because of the state of affairs then in Navelim constituency. It was one of the strongest bastions of the opposition against the ruling Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party and perhaps, because of it, the most neglected and oppressed. It suffered from the worst kind of political conspiracies.

In fact, the people of Navelim had to pay a very heavy price for their forthright views on Goa, issues near and dear to Goans. And also for being very loyal to the erstwhile United Goans Party in Goa. The then ruling party chief ministers, whether the late Dayanand Bandodkar or Shashikala Kakodkar, were hostile to the constituency and, therefore, it was denied funds for the development of roads, water supply and electricity. Truly, the people of my constituency were a defeated lot.

I had an opportunity of meeting them personally because my first election campaign was a-house-to-house one. Such was the level of apathy that they were not even bothered to know who was ruling Goa. They were not even concerned over what sort of benefits they could get and were due to them. Incredible but true, but some of them even thought that Bandodkar was still ruling even though he had died and his daughter had come to power. However, they were very conscious of when and where the shipping offices distributed recruitment forms. They also knew who their agents were. They looked anxiously for employment opportunities abroad. I could see at that time that the

economy of my constituency was a money-order one. Every alternate family had one bread-earner working abroad who sent monthly remittances. If the remittances stopped, every third house would have starved. That was the situation as far as the state of development was concerned. Navelim constituency was in a very pathetic state. There were some villages, in fact most villages, that had no roads, no water supply, no infrastructural facilities. Amazingly, in some villages, like Telaulim, not even a single square inch of the road had been done, not a single foot of pipeline laid. There were other villages, like Davorlim, Dicarpal and Navelim in an even more dismal a condition.

That was one side of the story. The other was to find out how best one could galvanize public opinion and interact to promote development. So I came up with a novel idea. It was the first of its kind at that time. I planned most meticulously direct interaction between the people of my constituency, the bureaucracy and the ministers concerned. I would later pattern my Janata Darbars, in the 70 days I was the Chief Minister of Goa, on this experience.

Sometime around March 21, 1980 I organized the first Navelim Constituency Mela. I organized the Navelim Constituency Citizens Committee and I invited all the ministers of the newly formed Congress government. I invited all the officers like the Chief Secretary, Development Commissioner, Chief Engineer-PWD, Chief Engineer, Electricity and other officials. I started my first meeting in Navelim village and then I had a series of meetings in different villages of my constituency. They went on from 8 o'clock in the morning till 8 in the night. Lunch was organized in my house for all of them. And then the officers with their convoy of vehicles visited one village after another. It is an experience which they will never forget in their lives and they have said so themselves. I remember the time a PWD engineer in charge of roads, said, "We went home with our noses full of dust."

Because he and others had to travel through dusty road and experience, first hand, the people's misery. We had planned with a vengeance the route for the convoy of vehicles. Fifty vehicles going over that dirt track ! You can imagine the dust they raised... The idea of doing it was simple: face the problems which the people face. It is not often that ministers and officers face what the people face and so they don't understand. There are also problems which the ministers and officers face and the people don't understand that, either. The ministers being directly accountable to the people, these people come to the ministers with their problems. But the ministers rely on the officers and often things don't get done.

So, this was the interaction of all the three and there were immediate solutions - on the spot. I asked the people to first come with their representations and memorandums. In every village we had a meeting. We had laid down a system. People waited for us in advance so when the ministers and officers came, they showed the memorandums to the ministers who, in turn, asked the officers why it was not possible. Spot decisions were taken and today I think this system of going to the villages, meeting the people, interacting with the people and the government and the bureaucracy is followed by other politicians and MLAs. Our novel idea paid rich dividends in my constituency, and as time went by in the whole of Goa.

How did this idea come to me? Because I was in a hopeless situation as there was no development at all. We had to use some new management techniques. Every month I published a bulletin, known as *Constituency Bulletin*, to publicize the problems, find solutions and focus on unresolved problems. My priority at that time was to organize and provide the people with basic infrastructural facilities such as roads, water supply, electricity, transport, schools. But the basic, number one priority was improving the standard of education in schools. The Lord



be praised, I succeeded to a great extent.

When my constituency was re-delimited and Varca, Orlim, Cavelossim and Carmona included in my constituency ten years after Liberation, they were in the same state of neglect as my old Navelim Constituency. So what I did ten years back I had to start, ten years later, in these new segments of my constituency. The constituency now comprises Navelim, Telaulim, Aquem, Davorlim, Dicarpale and the four new villages, Varca, Orlim, Carmona and Cavellosim. I lost in the bargain some big areas, like Dramapur, Sirlim and two thirds of the Margao Municipal area which was earlier in the Navelim constituency — areas like Mungul, Madel, Davondem, Old Market, Fatorda, Chandrawado, Housing Board, Gogol, Aquem Alto, Aquem Baixo. Some of these segments went to Fatorda, a new constituency and the others to Margao. I also formulated a slogan based on the Directive Principles of the Constitution; *Konnuch nennar urounck zaina, konnuch bekar urounck zaina, ani konnuck gorib urounck zaina*. There are very lofty ideas but which are very difficult to achieve in India, perhaps even in advanced countries. But to a great extent my illiteracy eradication drive has paid rich dividends in my constituency. Then on, when I concentrated on employment, I devised different schemes. Hotel management, tailoring and embroidery are some of the courses offered. And thanks to these schemes, many of my young unemployed constituents have found gainful employment.

I always felt that the true source of corruption is manifested in substandard work. It is one of these instances of cheap being really expensive. The basic rate may be low, but because the quality is bad, the cost of maintenance is high, and so is the cost of reconstruction. I should know from personal experience because I can boast of the highest mileage of road per capita in Navelim constituency. I am not really very happy with the standard and quality of the works undertaken.

There is an inherent defect in the system. Therefore, you get sub-standard work. I am not at all happy and am sure that unless and until something is done at the higher level there won't be a deterrent. These substandard works and that the wastage of public money will go on.

Navelim is my nursery. Through my experience in Navelim I have by now a fair idea about Goa's strengths and weaknesses, and the causes of its successes and failures. And more: how to remedy what is wrong and persist with what is right. Should the time and occasion come my way again I am fairly confident that I will be able to implement my agenda for Goa.

Why am I the recipient of such largesse and unstinted support from the people of Navelim constituency? Mainly because, I would like to think, I maintain the closest rapport with my voters. Their anxieties are mine. Their dreams are mine. The villages that comprised my constituency had plunged from the glorious past to the merciless neglect of the present. And now they were thriving on new hopes, discovering new potentialities, for their community as a general proposition and for themselves at a personal and individual level.

It has been my privilege to have been instrumental in building and improving the infrastructure of my constituency - roads, water and power supply, public transportation - and in giving the youth better chances to prepare themselves for the future - through schools, playgrounds, hotel management courses, training in farming. In Dicarpale, a remote OBC village, the literacy rate now is 100%! I have strived to make life more livable for women, supplementing their income through part-time activities like kitchen gardens, tailoring and embroidery.

Today some of the 1500 Navelim constituency youths, trained by us at our hotel management and housekeeping courses, are known to earn Rs. 25,000 each month on board merchant navy ships. Five thousand women have been trained in various craft. The drive to revive traditional trades and craft has been most fruitful. Farming and agriculture were shunned because in Navelim, as elsewhere in Goa, educated young persons abhor manual labour. We were lucky in getting 1000 persons interested in our camps for farmer training. Over hundred youths have obtained motor driving licences. Farmers', co-operative societies have acquired agricultural tractors. Indeed, the co-operative movement has caught on in Navelim constituency. We have launched the *Sal Requisites Farmers Co-operative Society* and *The Rosary Farmers Co-operative Society* which, between them, cover all the eight village segments of the constituency. We have started a wood-carving centre and a pottery centre in Navelim constituency to revive Goan handicrafts that have practically vanished. In Goa, the country's number one tourist centre, the handicrafts we offer the nearly two million tourists who visit us are: carpets from Kashmir, garments from Rajasthan, brassware from UP and so on... But, once we were internationally famous for our walking sticks, the socks knitted in Goa were sought by discriminating London dandies, our Goan tailors could replicate the most intricate Parisian designs.

We are now at the crossroads. The future is ours, most of the miseries of the past are well behind us. But one single wrong move by those who hold in their hands the destiny of our great and beautiful Goa, could be the doom of all of us. Not just theirs. What we, politicians, have to ask ourselves is: are we doing our duty by our voters, by our constituencies? Or have we betrayed them? Once elected, did we forget our campaign pledges and promises and pursue, solely and entirely, our own personal interests?

I must draw the line between dissent and treachery. I have often dissented, but never betrayed my party. Recently, in 1994 some of us, in Cong (I) felt that the local leadership was being less than fair to itself and to the party. Somehow, for reasons I will not go into, the Chief Minister was distancing himself from us. He seemed to lack confidence in us. I had the courage to resign. I felt that the circumstances called for action. I thought that sacrifice I must, that my self-respect left me no other option. I sent my resignation to the Congress (I) President and I was out of the Cabinet — with no regrets.

In the past members of every single party competing for the mandate of the Goan people, have often proved to be singularly bereft of a sense of discipline, of loyalty to their own party. We have seen them joining hands with the opposition. And sadly, they sometimes succeeded. The events that followed the 1989 elections — the countermanding, the defections, the re-defections, the battle for disqualification, for requalification, for re-admission, are, I am sure, still fresh in the voters' minds. Indeed, the lengths to which some people have gone! Disgracefully worse was to happen in 1998 and 1999 and President's Rule had to be imposed. There was no option.

But let us pause and ask what could have unleashed such disgraceful and amoral behaviour? Did it have something to do with party tickets being given to the wrong people and denied to deserving candidates? Was the fallout because of personal whims? How else did the Congress (I) lose in four or five constituencies, where the total votes polled by the official candidate and the rebel candidates patronized by some party stalwarts exceeded the votes polled by the opposition candidates, the eventual beneficiaries of internecine battles, of reckless power games? Did not those games reduce the party's majority? And did not Goan politics become, as a result, the cliff-hanger it has been

since 1990? Was not the shameless performance encored in Loutolim in the 1993 by-election? Pray, who benefited from all this? Who?! Was it worth it?

We have exculpated ourselves — all too often in my view — by describing our ugly squabbles as “family quarrels”, the kind of misunderstanding that temporarily divides even the best of families, that blood eventually always proves to be thicker than water. That when it comes to the crunch, it is all shoulders to the wheel... The clichés are no doubt apt, but it is also true, as the Portuguese picturesquely said, *‘tantas vezes vae o cântaro á fonte, que lá fica’* - so often does the pitcher go to the spring that it there remains....



CONFERENCE INTERNATIONALE
DU TRAVAIL



My International Encounters

There is total unanimity in that the Goan culture is admirable and unique. Principally, because it is the product of the cross-fertilization of many cultures. Many were the peoples who envied and possessed Goa. They came from far, some crossing seas and daring storms, others fording rivers, climbing mountains, braving inclement weather, fighting man and beast on their way.

Which, perhaps, is why a Goan, any Goan, is so fond of travelling, sampling other lands, taking from them what is unique, leaving behind his own contribution to their culture and happiness. Wherever a Goan goes he makes it a better place for his hosts.

Every Goan seeks a particular goal in his travels. Most have livelihood as the prime purpose. Many, however, have other, loftier goals. Goan missionaries and Goan doctors are, perhaps, the ones who are the most gratefully remembered wherever they served.

My interest in life is to meet different kinds of people, to visit places. My urge is to learn about new places, new people, their lifestyles, their culture. That is my life's passion. In fact, I always say that before I die my wish is to see all parts of the world and learn from such visits. Because there is no learning as great as visiting places, meeting people and seeing their different cultures at work. This passion of mine has given me a lot of opportunity of seeing, meeting, learning and enriching my knowledge, attitude and vision.

Wherever I went abroad and whenever I had an opportunity of

meeting Goans abroad, I always remarked that Goans have done well all over the world, *except* in Goa. Wherever Goans have gone they have done better than the average citizens of that area and they have done well all over the world, alas, *except* in Goa. For example, I happened to be in Toronto when I had an opportunity of addressing a gathering at Toronto University. It was a meeting organized by the International Goans Organisation (IGO). Similarly, I addressed Goan associations and organizations in London, New York, New Jersey, San Francisco, L.A. Wherever I went I gave them one message. That while you'll have done well in your areas, you must come back to your roots and enrich them. I remember reading a Chinese proverb that advises man to abide by the rules of nature. The trees grow, become strong, blossom and bear fruit. Then they age, they shrivel, they shed leaves, eventually die. But the leaves they shed enrich the soil and on the soil new seeds sprout new plants that grow into tall trees that in time branch out, bear flowers and fruits. And so are life, love and happiness perpetuated. Likewise, I tell the Goans I meet abroad, they must come back to their roots and invest in the land of their birth their experience, their knowledge, and if they have it, money.

In Toronto I addressed Navelim expatriates who have their own organization. In Toronto the Goan Overseas Association had a reception — it is a Goan organization with an international character. They held the first Goan International Convention in Toronto. In London, too, **they have a very good organisation.**

I had the fortune of being selected as a leader of the Indian delegation at the United Nations for the ILO Conference in Geneva in 1994. In fact the selection was finalized by the Prime Minister's Office. It was a unique privilege and honour given to Goa to represent the country. Normally the assignment was given to a Central minister, not a State minister, but to my bad luck it was sometime around May 18,

1994, when we were in yet another phase of our recurring political turnarounds. Dr. Wilfred de Souza, the then Chief Minister, played one of his famous games... He did not allot portfolios for some time. And when he did he saw to it that I was not given the Labour portfolio so that I could not represent India. His office contacted our Goa Sadan Resident Commissioner in Delhi to inform the Union Ministry of Labour that Luizinho Faleiro is a minister but the ministers have not yet been allotted portfolios. Then, the Ministry of Labour contacted our Chief Secretary. They contacted the Chief Minister himself. Dr. Wilfred de Souza gave me Law and Judiciary but Labour, which was my previous charge, was not given to me. To my good and to his bad luck, I was selected again in 1995, to lead the Indian delegation as Deputy Leader along with P. Sagma, the then Union Labour Minister.

If audience response is the yardstick, I seem to have made an impact with the words I spoke on the occasion. I will reproduce *excerpts* of that speech.

"India is going through a period of economic liberalization and structural adjustment. Our liberalization policies, which came about initially to overcome a severe economic crisis in 1991, have now been set on an even keel and have reached a take-off stage. Yesterday's detractors have become today's supporters and I can safely say that the liberalization policies now enjoy the consensus of all major political parties in India. The issue *now* is not the face of change *but* the pace of it.

"In an effort to create more than nine million jobs a year to meet the growing demands of the population, we have used the vehicle of accelerated economic growth to achieve this end. Mr. Chairman, creation of employment is our first and primary task and our policies are designed to achieve that. Let us not

forget that even the best - intentioned ILO Conventions are of no use if the individual remains unemployed. Our goal is to bring down employment levels to a minimum by 2002 AD”.

I also focused on the concomitants of the influx of foreign investments. I invited attention to the fact that “while a pattern of mixed economy ensured a balanced all-round regional development, the influx of foreign investments may not be an unmixed blessing. Foreign investments, triggered by liberalization of economies, tend to flow in areas where infrastructure is readily available already. This can cause regional imbalances in investments vis-à-vis areas lacking in infrastructure with consequent employment and income disparities. Domestic policies, therefore, should promote well spread out infrastructure development. In fact, an important strategy should be to invite foreign investments for infrastructure development itself on a priority basis. This would also spur further growth and development in non-infrastructural areas”.

Indeed, open door investments and industrialization do throw domestic industries into competition with stronger overseas investors. Exposures to such competition clubbed with withdrawal of domestic industry protection results in a demand from these domestic industries for a “level playing field”. This would, therefore, call for careful prioritization of the direction of investment flows instead of totally leaving it to the market forces.

And I dwelt on my pet topic: the issue of child labour. “India has reiterated on numerous occasions its determination to root out the scourge of child labour and taken several purposeful strides in this direction”.

There was full agreement with me that child labour is a



deep-rooted socio-economic problem which cannot be tackled overnight as many speakers in the Plenary had lead us to believe. If there were any doubts on this score, then we were living in a make-believe world. The causes were multi-faceted, I stressed. While the motivation for continued child labour prevalence in developed countries may be different, it is unquestionable that in the developing countries, it is a matter of survival necessitated by extreme poverty and the need to supplement the meagre resources of the family. It was important to exercise our minds as much as our hearts to find a well-thought out policy, not just an emotional one, to bring to an end this scourge.

However, our delegation had received a strong signal from many speakers in that Plenary that they looked at this issue primarily as a political one from which to draw mileage and not a socio-economic problem as it is in reality. Seen in that light, it made us wonder whether this sudden focus from some international quarters had a hidden agenda. Some aspects of the agenda were manifest, especially in the recent moves to promote a social clause. The mood was confrontational. Instead of working with countries to solve the problem of child labour in a non-confrontational manner we were now being targeted. We saw it as a dangerous trend. If the trend were to continue, we would end up worsening the situation of children rather than helping them. Further, being a socio-economic problem, excessive emphasis on legislative action and prosecution were not the right answer to the issue. Economic growth combined with political will might resolve it.

The Chairman, and members of the Plenary, I am happy to recall, heard me with concern, attention and sympathy.

Earlier, in 1993, I had the opportunity of representing India in Lisbon, at the Advisory Committee, on Protection of the Sea (ACOPS). ACOPS' main thrust was the implementation of Agenda 21 of the Earth

Summit. It was the extension of the Earth Summit in Rio which was organized by the Government of Portugal and the Advisory Committee on Protection of Sea, a UN body. On environment and ecology, the topic was "Coastal Tourism and Sustainable Development".

I used, to the fullest, that great opportunity to articulate my views in that forum on a theme that is so dear to my heart — ecology and environment. Back home, I had tried to do what best I could to save what we still have and avoid further degradation. The topic given to me, "Environmental Pressure of Tourism in Goa: options for sustainable development". It was an inspiring topic. And the setting was perfect: Lisbon, the capital city of our once colonial masters. I was applauded when I began: "Five years from now, it will be 500 years since the legendary Vasco da Gama left the shores of city of Lisbon and landed on the shores of a dreamland known as India. His quest, really, was Goa. As per the Indian mythology when the learned Brahmans (Priests) approached God Parshuram for an abode of peace and tranquillity, the mighty God shot an arrow into the sea and created an idyllic land on the western sea board of India with beautiful vegetation, verdant hills, palm fringed beaches and meandering rivers".

I was, then on, in full flow: "With this rich historical and natural background, over the last 500 years Goa was rightly referred to by conquerors, travellers and poets as *Golden Goa*, and also, *Pearl of the East*. This nascent State of India, through its glorious, if chequered, history, has developed into a major tourist destination in India. Wittingly or unwittingly, we have outstretched the tourism activities thus endangering, through sheer greed and mindlessness, that same supreme miracle of creativity.

"I often ask myself whether our tourism policy is right and where it might lead us. Unfortunately, these are questions that,

perhaps, only the children of my grand-children will be able to answer. For, indeed, we do not inherit the earth, we only borrow it from our children”.

No doubt, leisure is one of the fast-growing industries in the world. The spread to travel culture has taken deep roots for it enables people to combine relaxation with a spirit of adventure. The growth of modern modes of transportation, which makes for faster mobility has been one of the major catalysts for it.

I echoed the view that management of tourism is a very complex task. It makes enormous demands on the resources of the place, both natural and man-made. Its impact is widely dispersed and, if unchecked and uncontrolled, could lead to fairly disastrous consequences. There was, I pointed out, a general tendency of sacrificing the quality of environment in order to bring in the greatest amount of revenue in the shortest time. Such misguided overuse or misuse was to be avoided, for it is precisely the natural setting and the overall ambience of the place that attract tourists. Goa, being a small State, the impact of such misuse would be proportionately greater.

And I suggested ways to regulate tourism. Orderly developments in the desired and preplanned manner essentially needed the appropriate support of legal infrastructure. Therefore, the development along the sensitive coastal areas, which could be called an Area of Difficult Planning and Development (A.D.P.D.), was desirable, to cope with various issues, like interest of fishermen and their increasing activities and land demand, orchard development for the purpose of coconut seeds and coconut alcohol, silica mining and overall rapidly increasing tourism activities. All these activities, while generating economic opportunities and thereby providing employment and enhancement of quality of life, have had deep physical and environmental impact. Once

an environment — in its fullest sense — is degraded, it would take a generation or more to restore it.

So, the approach to planning, development and management of A.D.P.D. ought to be that: environment comes first, development second. In other words, top priority had to be assigned to the environmental issues while preparing the plans. This needed support of law.

I concluded by saying that sustainable development “means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development brought together two strands of thought about the management of human activities — one concentrating on development goals and the other about achieving these goals without damaging the life-support systems, or unsustainable resource use”.

What was needed was appropriate plans and policies that would resolve the needs of the residents and tourists alike. Protection and preservation of the natural scenic environment were essential for tourism, as visitors are, basically, seeking a change in their day-to-day surroundings.

I thought that the Portuguese participants in that meet were very impressed with my words. In the opinion of one of them, I had defended the interests of a land the Portuguese loved most and with very good reasons.

Later, I led the Goan Industrial Delegation to Portugal. That was yet another memorable opportunity to invite our past masters to become our life-long partners. Portuguese ties with India date back to the 15th century, and the time had come now to renew the friendship to the mutual interest of both the countries. The presence of that High Powered

Delegation was an indication of the importance given by us to the visit. I told my Portuguese audience "we are here to identify the opportunities of mutual co-operation and technical and financial collaboration with your country".

Earlier, in April that same year, we had the honour of hosting the trade delegation from Portugal. We, in Goa, the youngest State of our Republic of India, had travelled a long way in the last 33 years. I then, dwelt, in some detail, on our domestic plans, and the opportunities available to old friends, like Portugal. The most valuable asset that we have inherited from our Portuguese times was the international all-weather Port at Mormugao. It now handles 15 million tonnes of iron ore and provides a wide range of facilities. It has been largely mechanized and with the new railway networks nearing completion, the port will have one of the largest containerized cargo handling facilities in India.

And after detailing our plans and the opportunities for good entrepreneurs, I told them that, indeed, in Goa the sky was now the limit. There was also ample scope for mutual co-operation in horticulture, pisciculture and floriculture. And Goa, by virtue of its past cultural and language relations with Portugal, could play an important role as the principal centre in India, for industrial exchanges between the two countries. It was a good sign that individual entrepreneurs and companies, as well as institutions, like chambers of commerce from both countries had already begun a dialogue. I had no doubt that the outcome of this visit by the trade delegation of our country would be another forward step in this direction.

International interactions have helped me a great deal to broaden my vision and to establish contacts which in turn, have helped the State tremendously. For example, the Tool Room Training Centre in Goa which imparts training in the new state-of-art technology is a UNDP - UNIDO -

ILO joint project, in conjunction, of course, with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of India and Government of Goa.

I tried to get an incubator through the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and my Department. Goa by now has hosted many ILO Regional conferences with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. We had international meets on child labour, labour standards, on various personnel and welfare-related themes.

I attended a meeting at Miami. It was organized by the World Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, an Indian organization recognized by UNIDO, UNDP, ILO and other leading organizations. In my speech I repeated what I have been saying in Goa and didn't quite succeed in getting implemented. That we must have in place the right policies. That we must have a well-trained, well-focused labour force if we are to succeed in our industrial policy. Further, that we ought to create the training facilities in Goa, with local technocrats and teachers. That there is no point in going on, as we seem to be doing at the moment, importing outside technicians and teachers.

I visited a number of other countries. A few of them come to mind, like France, Germany, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, USA, Canada and several Asian countries. In fact, except Africa and Australia, and excepting Russia and China to nations that matter, I have been to all the continents. Wherever I went I made it a point to learn and observe their industrial training methods, their technical educational programmes. Because they are the key to human resource development, higher productivity and prosperity. In a word, happiness.

And I keep moving from place to place, peddling a great idea: come to Goa, there is no better place to do business. Our biggest asset is our people. Intelligent, eager, honest. Unmatchable.



Trials And Tribulations

A question I am often asked by those who wish me well, no less than by those who in their heart of hearts would be happy to see my eclipse, is how effective a legislator can be if he or she does not wield power, if he or she does not have the right equations with those in power. My answer to the question has to be one necessarily based on my experience, on the realities of my career, spanning now over twenty years as a labour leader and as a legislator.

And my considered view is that no one, whether in business or politics, can afford to be deaf to reason or insensitive to genuine grievances. Nor to be a fence-sitter. Or a plodder. One has to be in the thick of it all the time. Bold. Courageous. But, above all, rational. Also learn to take the rough with the smooth And have the wisdom to bide one's time. On today's setback tomorrow's triumph could be structured. I am, of course, relying on my, by now, fairly varied even if, at times, bewildering personal experience.

As mentioned, I began my public life as a labour leader. I was a humble employee of Zuari Agro Chemicals (ZAC), since renamed Zuari Industries, then and even now the largest and the most powerful, financially and politically, corporate organization in Goa, and in fact one of the most dominant companies in the country's stock exchanges and a member of one of the county's largest business houses and hence, an internationally respected conglomerate.

Yet, when I felt that my comrades and I were not given our just rewards, I protested. That I was listened to underscores the respect of

the ZAC management and the courage of conviction of my co-workers.

Soon, as the reader knows by now, I was leading other unions, like MRF, Mandovi Pellets, etc. I did not believe in flexing muscles for the heck of it. I did not use my clout as a leader to achieve personal gains. I succeeded in my strategy — take the bull by the horns if I had to, but fight for a cause, a just cause.

I tried my hand at entrepreneurship at a crucial stage of my evolution. I got into real estate development. But the great lesson I learnt was that a developer need not — indeed must not — vandalize ecology and environment. I am happy that I could abide by the norm. And if it is of any use to others, set a precedent. When I stood for elections to the Goa Legislative Assembly for the first time, to be frank, my only political capital was my sincerity, my immense desire to be of use to my constituents, to succeed in an endeavor which, somehow, had eluded my predecessors, powerful men as they might have been, men of great stature, my elders in age, probably wiser in their knowledge of the world and its wicked ways. They were eminently qualified men.

But, somehow, despite their best efforts and immense capacity, Navelim remained, by and large, neglected. Frustration was yielding place to a seething rage. The constituency has had various territorial configurations at different times, but if one considers all its changing segments and components, the people I now represent were once the constituents of Leo Velho, a lawyer. Parts of it had been represented by Anna Sarmalkar, a Titan, one of the most popular politicians of Salcete, who won by unbeatable margins. Anna Sarmalkar was succeeded by Dr. Wilfred R. De Souza. After a see-sawing legal battle that is still remembered. Dr. Willy de Souza had, at the first count, lost by two votes to the MGP candidate, that party's first and historic victory

in a UGP stronghold. After a gigantic legal battle which went all the way to the Supreme Court, Dr. de Souza was declared elected. But four precious years were lost and little of significance was done for the constituents. And, as a result, I inherited areas in my constituency where there was, not an inch of tarred road or a single pipeline of public water supply.

I was, as the reader knows, fortunate in being the only MLA elected on the Goa Congress ticket, in the 1984 elections. Led by Dr. Wilfred de Souza, we had parted company with the mother-party on grounds that seemed to us moral and justified. However, the electorate did not endorse our fledgling party. But at Navelim, they were very considerate to me. In fact, they elected me with the largest majority in that battle of the ballot.

Looking back at the two decades of my public life and many years as a labour leader, I derive what consolation I might from the fact that I could face adversity with a cool mind. In the end I often turned it into an opportunity to imbibe many skills and perceptions to emerge from each experience a better man.

For instance, when I left the Congress in 1983 I was in a bitter and frustrated mood. But I didn't allow it to distract me from the tasks I had set myself. I was young then. My dreams were inspired by my experiences as a child and then as an adolescent and the young adult who always dreamt big, often the impossible. How to make Goa as green as it had been in the days when I as a child trudged my way through fields and trees to school, with the birds and butterflies as my guides and escorts ? How to recover the values we prized as adolescents, that intense friendship, that healthy and clean camaraderie that bound us, girls and boys, and gave us so much happiness and pride in Konkani, our mother tongue, that was dying ? We had got rid of the white

colonial masters, but now we were no better than serfs of the brown ministers and bureaucrats sitting in Delhi and their agent, the Lt. Governor, who had another awesome title, Administrator, sitting in Goa. The Administrator could overrule the Goa Cabinet and on occasion indulged in the pleasure. The elected Government of Goa had no financial powers. They were vested in the Administrator. The Administrator's Secretary attended Cabinet meetings and not unoften, as any self-serving bureaucrat would, was over-bearing, spewing wisdom at the least provocation.

So I had my work cut out for me. I was not going to sit and sulk. I was going to prove my mettle. I was going to articulate the wishes of the people, their grievances. Their frustrations would be mine. I would have the government on its toes. If it did not know the way to progress and reason, I would show it through my initiatives, in and out of the Legislative Assembly. Like a wounded tiger, I vented my fury with no inhibitions.

So as the reader knows by now, I brought various resolutions and various bills which, modesty apart, are now part of the history of the state of Goa, like my resolution on the Konkani Academy, like my resolution on the Official Language, like my resolution on Statehood and like my bills on Konkani, ecology, environment, unemployment, help to the old and infirm, the disadvantaged and the marginalized. I had, then, to go to the people, lead a movement through the people and with their help and support the same government was forced to accept those very bills. Both the State and Central governments eventually fell in line.

Eventually, but finally under pressure, Chief Minister Rane, who was not really a Konkani apostle, accepted our logic. All the other ministers were equally luke-warm. It was only when people virtually

attacked them that they ran to Delhi and said, "No we can't go back to Goa without an assurance on Konkani". They had been physically attacked by the people. Francisco Sardinha's house was ransacked. Proto Barbosa's house was ransacked. Once people take a movement in their hands, they do it their way. That was the moral of the story, for all politicians, me included.

All through those struggles, machinations, manoeuvres, plots and sub-plots, I kept reminding myself of my mother's words of experience and wisdom. That power itself was a worthless garment. It might give one the impression that it improves one's image. That it expands one's area of action. That one is important, indispensable and invincible. And her basic teachings of discipline, work ethics and work culture helped me to redefine "power". It was just a tool to serve better. It couldn't — and should never be — a route to riches. And never, ever, be inspired by self-esteem.

Which, perhaps, is why I could — and proudly did — resist to the many offers of ministership and chief ministership made to me from time to time, by all manner of people.

I was offered a berth in the cabinet in 1982. There was no anti-defection law then and the temptation to join was great, young as I was then. But I decided to decline and that done, felt at great ease with my conscience. And by that gesture I had greatly enhanced my image before my constituents. At the next contest, in 1989, my would be rivals decided to withdraw their nomination papers, perhaps as a recognition of my efforts. Perhaps, also, because they were realists and could sense the mood of the voters.

In 1989 we had the unforgettable verdict of the Goan electorate. It made it clear to us, in the Congress (I) which by then Goa Congress

had rejoined, that we had, to an extent, forfeited their trust; and it made it clear to the MGP that they were still not good enough to rule Goa. Congress (I) ended up with a working majority and formed the Government. But soon, Goa's darkest chapter began to unfold, with the PDF storming to power in the most incestuous display of political chicanery. Churchill approached me at my residence. He told me, "You accept the Chief Ministership, you will be the first Catholic Chief Minister of Goa. People are fed up with the present Chief Minister. Because he has been there for a long time. You come in." I said I was not coming. "I am not ready to become the Chief Minister, certainly not in this manner. That's your target". Then he went for an operation on a nagging knee problem. He came back after the operation from Bombay and approached me again. And I refused yet again.

I had no reason to doubt the sincerity of Churchill's offer and the sentiment behind it. We had fought for Konkani, using every stratagem that came to our mind. And, indeed, he would have been a happy man if I had accepted his suggestion. So, he approached me, at least, four or five times.

Rane had kept Proto out then because he thought he was one of his most loyal men. Willy had been brought into the cabinet. But neither Proto Barbosa nor Churchill took their exclusion from the Cabinet kindly and formed the PDF government. And we remained in the Opposition for a short while. I always quote the Ramayana and the Mahabharat because it has got very rich similarities to such incidents. It was "Dharma" versus "Adharma". To fight one evil I had to engineer another evil. To fight one defection I had to engineer another defection. And I did it single-handedly. By which I brought in Ravi Naik and six others. i.e. Amshekar, Dharma, Verenkar, Shankar Salgoankar, Raut and Usgaonkar. These were the seven which were supposed to come. But then three of them changed their views. The agreement was that Ravi

Naik would be the first Chief Minister for half the term and the balance half would be a Congress (I) Chief Minister. But Willy said, "Nothing doing. I can get another few". So he brought in Sanjay Bandekar, Chopdekar, Churchill, Farel, Ashok Naik Salgoankar. Eventually Sanjay Bandekar and Chopdekar were disqualified. When this group was brought in, Willy said, "I will be the first Chief Minister". It was cloak and dagger all the way.

We had several meetings. Then, Willy stepped in. He said, "Now you see how I am doing it". But Ravi became the Chief Minister. Willy lost and took his defeat badly. The Bhandari Samaj was born in my hotel at Kesarval. I had a meeting with all of them. On August 14, on the eve of Independence day, they went to Ponda and told Ravi Naik, "See we've got enough MLAs. You decide whether you want to be our leader; as a Bhandari Samaj leader". In that I succeeded. But Willy had set his eyes on becoming the first chief minister. So I said, OK if you feel that way you can be the first chief minister and if Ravi is agreeable to become the chief minister in the second term, then negotiate directly with him. And he brought Ashok Naik Salgoankar who was not there in the initial group. He got Churchill and Farrel. He got Sanjay Bandekar and Chopdekar. To me there was no question of my aligning with Ravi or Willy. It just did not arise. It was sheer expediency.

Then we formed a new government in 1991. Thereafter, we threw out PDF from the freshly-formed government. Things were not bright, at least, not, during those times. Certain things were all right, certain things were not. But then Ravi Naik was disqualified by the High Court just about when I had gone to Portugal as a representative from India to participate in the Conference organized for the implementation of Agenda 21 of the Rio Summit at Lisbon. It was now time for Willy to become the Chief Minister. So I came back immediately and I supported Willy as the chief minister. I came back on May 16. Willy was selected

by us as the chief of CLP in Goa either on 17th or 18th and we were sworn in the same day. The next day, R. L. Bhatia and a host of Congress emissaries came to supervise the transition.

Relations between Dr. de Souza and I then soured considerably. Why? Perhaps he was jealous and afraid that Luizinho Faleiro would become popular. He also worked actively for my defeat in the last election in 1994. He tried his best but it wasn't good enough.

It makes me sad to think and realize that such an old and good friend, such a beautiful relationship of trust, respect and admiration could end so abruptly, so illogically.

In short, I could have been a minister long before I became one, and even the chief minister, if I had no respect for values, I am today where I am, as I am, perhaps wiser but certainly not sadder. But having said that, I must also state most unambiguously that my constituents' love, respect, loyalty and encouragement have been paramount to me. I don't mean to brag but indeed mine was hard work. The disadvantaged were my top priority. When I go through my constituency, its old and new segments, memories of their past inadequate development come to me.

But if you ask me if I have accomplished my mission, my answer will be "No". There is more to be done, much more, in fact. Because new ambitions, new goals are — and will remain — any sensible politician's permanent companions. And I have learnt new lessons in the seventy-odd days I was at the helm of affairs. Unforgettable experiences, but I will put them behind us.

Our Failures

With the sincerity and humility that, hopefully, has characterized this straight-from-the-heart report to the citizens of Goa, an autobiography in a sense, a rendering of accounts in another and perhaps the main aspect, I will now deal with the failures.

The biggest — and by now perhaps irreversible — failure, mine and of all politicians in general, particularly those voted to public office by a trusting and, in many ways suffering, polity, is one of image. We, politicians, couldn't have a worse image. An "honest" politician, according to the prevailing public perception, is not necessarily the one who is upright and invulnerable to bribery. The people seem to have resigned themselves to the notion that in the existing ambience, venality is understandable and even inevitable. Put philosophically, inflation is taking its toll. The yardstick now, it seems, is: take your money if you must, but deliver the promise.

And what is a politician expected to deliver: a job out of turn for a relative out of turn, winking at the set selection procedure or at the lack of the prescribed qualifications, the regularisation of a house built infringing legal or environmental parameters; conversion of agricultural land; etc., etc. In short, "a way out" to put it compassionately, sheer anarchy, if one were to take a grim view of it.

Which, in other and unambiguous words, means that corruption breeds corruption. And it has a price-tag that the citizen is willing to pay and the politician is eager to take.



When I offered my Employment Policy for Goa to the public at large for debate and criticism in 1991, I spoke my mind. I will recall here some of the thoughts that agonised me and continue to bother me.

Every day, rain or shine, whatever the party or consortium in power, and whatever the social philosophy of the rulers or the size and composition of the Cabinet, the corridors of the Adil Shah Palace are thronged by petitioners. They come from all over Goa, braving all kinds of difficulties, physical and economic, and stoically enduring sometimes unbearable discomfort. Often they go back disappointed. My aim was that the fruits of that policy would be derived in full by the future generations.

Most of the jobless come to the ministers to plead for a job — for themselves, their offspring and siblings. Many of the job-seekers are qualified young men and women who are basically honest, and in a large number of cases, intelligent and eager to prove their usefulness to themselves and to society.

It saddens me that these youth have literally to beg for something that ought to have been theirs by right: the right to work, the right to employment, the right to exercise their skills and abilities, the right to a life of dignity.

So desperate is the situation of unemployment in Goa that one no longer is shocked to hear the rumours in the market place — that the level of patronage rather than personal merit often decides the fate of our job-seekers. That, horror of horrors, in this God-fearing Goa of ours it is no longer a sin to offer and accept bribes to secure a job. The amounts mentioned are simply unbelievable. It saddens me, and it ought to sadden every decent person, that many of our youth have to

start their career on the wrongest of wrong notes — by paying a tribute to corruption and venality.

Yet, it is true that Goa has made tremendous progress in every field since its liberation in 1961. Our birth and death rates are not only the lowest in the country, but compare well with the most highly advanced societies of the developed world, like Switzerland. We are well on the way to our target of 100 per cent literacy. We have achieved other enviable targets — 100 per cent electrification, macadamized roads in every village, a remarkable spread-out of health care, improved farming techniques and new industries. Progress and achievement have become synonymous in post-colonial Goa.

But, as anywhere else, Goa's was progress-at-a-price. We now have new problems at hand: urbanization, congestion, over-crowding, slums and a constant and growing threat to our ecology, ethos and culture. What is particularly dangerous is that we seem to tend to believe that the social, ethnological and ecological upheavals threatening us are but the inevitable consequences of industrialization. And that they must be tamely accepted in the interests of "progress".

Yet, we know that it is true that a country like Germany, with a density of population at 246 per sq. km. (as against India's at 216), has raised itself from the ruins of World War II to its present towering position and become a leading industrial and economic power-house. But Germany did not brutalize itself. Arts and culture flourish there. The sciences are zealously perfected. Forests and greenery are to be seen everywhere.

There is no congestion, no overcrowding. They seem to have achieved a judicious spread of population and industries. And we? Need one elaborate?

I believe we have created serious if not insurmountable problems on the employment front because of lack of foresight to anticipate problems and the will to correct distortions at the right time. Goa seems to have embarked, particularly in the first two trend-setting decades of our freedom, on a mindless building activity in the mistaken notion that the massive and far-from-perfect civil construction activity undertaken by the Public Works Department was by itself "development".

The result is there for all to see: ugly buildings which have led to a coarsening of public tastes, large scale deforestation, large scale influx of migrant labour which, one is told, could be in the region of 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the total population.

It is even more distressing that the migrant labourers are exploited by their employers. They are lured with false promises by unscrupulous touts and subject to inhuman living conditions. They are not provided by their contractors even creature comforts. Many of them had run away from hunger and pestilence prevailing in their original habitats in the belief that they had nothing to lose but their misery.

The result of the thoughtlessness and lack of vision is that we, who had inherited a clean and healthy environment from our forefathers, find ourselves on the verge of legating to our children — should we fail to act here and now — gigantic social problems, an acute aesthetic chaos and the fear of endemic diseases. Ugly and depressing slums keep mushrooming all over. Diseases we had once successfully eradicated, e.g. malaria, cholera and other gastro-enteric disorders, are resurfacing and new diseases we had never heard of before, like Japanese encephalitis, dengue and other viral epidemics, are becoming endemic. The Pune Institute of Virology has by now sourced our problems to the regions from where many of our migrant

labourers hail and where such diseases are known to be endemic.

The question of survival stares Goa and Goans in the face with a seriousness that brooks no complacency - survival of the Goan ethos, of the Goan environment, of all the glorious traditions inherited and proudly legated over the millennia of Goa's presence as a beacon of enlightenment on the West coast of India.

And it also is a question of survival for thousands of youth leaving, year after year, schools, colleges and technical institutions and raring to go. The problem, in its simplest and broadest terms, is that we are yet to find the golden mean between the cult of heritage and the inexorability of progress.

For a wide variety of reasons, job seekers in Goa, as much as in other States of the Union, are generally fixated on white collar jobs — particularly white collar jobs in the government — failing which, in the State-owned corporations and financial institutions.

I believe a beginning was made. In the farming sector an attempt was made by me at what, for want of a more orthodox nomenclature, I will call "farm processing", not just agro-based industrial activities and not merely food processing ventures, but going beyond the confines of those, by now established, sectors of agro-based activities, creating a new culture - a new philosophy, if we may so term it.

I will also share my thoughts with regard to another strategy, equally innovative, to not just re-orient our youth in their job preferences, but to create a new trend, even among those who already have government jobs. Sadly, I failed in my first attempt. I had in mind a scheme which would offer government servants liberal incentives to embark on entrepreneurial activities in the small scale sector. They would be allowed to have a lien on their government jobs for, say, a

period of five years, after which, we believed, they would be in a position to take a conscious and enlightened decision. I also considered allowing government servants to seek, on a trial basis, jobs abroad and derive full benefits of their NRI status. They would be given, in this case too, a reasonable time, five years, as we suggested earlier, to make up their mind. I didn't really succeed. I planned the creation of an Overseas Employment Corporation which would be able to guide, place and oversee job-seekers wanting to migrate to other countries. I would, to the extent possible, free them from the clutches and the deceitful ways of unscrupulous job brokers and agents. I thought we ought to also have a Non-Resident Goans Corporation to guide and promote investments by Goans earning their livelihood abroad. Sadly, I do not have any positive response to show.

One cannot ignore the factual situation that Goa no longer has its own manpower for unskilled jobs demanding heavy physical efforts or exertion. Perhaps, we ought to plan, right now, for mechanization, at an acceptable level, of our industrial, agricultural, civil construction and other development activities.

Earlier I had formed the O.B.C. Corporation and the Women's Corporation. These bodies must be activated.

It worries me — and it ought to worry all those who have implicit faith in the Goan genius — that not many of our youth seem to be willing to enter the exciting and adventurous field of self-employment. They might have done better justice to their skills if they were to trust themselves and make a bold attempt to stand on their own two feet. Those willing to give themselves a try, I renew the promise, will be given every possible facility.

It also worries me that the reliance — over-reliance might be the apt word — on contract labour is leading to patently anachronistic

situations. For one, barring a few exceptions, such a reliance could compromise the ultimate quality of the product. For another, contract labour has by now become a kind of vested interest of the contractors no less than several other agencies. I was surprised to see the other day that an industrial unit pays as little as Rs. 300/- p.m. to the contract labour it uses. This by itself calls for stern regulation. If the workmen's output is so valuable, then why deny them the permanency they deserve?

In consonance with my address to ILO in June 1995, I had proposed to abolish contract labour in a phased manner. Contractors, and employers using contract labour will have to go to the Employment Exchange for their new recruitments.

But one will continue to try to improve the working conditions in the private sector so as to render it more attractive to those of our job seekers who right now seem to be obsessed with government jobs and do not seem to be aware or believe that the private sector could offer very good compensation packets, ideal working conditions, a good environment and, all said and done, guarantees of job tenure that could rival, and in many cases, supplant the offerings by government departments and state sector organizations. This should be a complementary initiative to my on-going endeavours to spread the message of self-entrepreneurship in Goa.

However, one might have to guarantee new enterprises some kind of protection from unfair labour practices for three to five years from the inception of their activities. A moratorium, for three to five years, on labour strife could be one way of doing it. But if such a step is taken, the logical corollary would be to revise minimum wages to realistic levels. I have yet another idea to assist entrepreneurs. I think they ought to feel free, particularly the small, family-run units, to recruit the best and most productive personnel, from their point of view. All

that such entrepreneurs will have to do is to take the names to the Employment Exchange and get them registered. We should assure them that it will be done over the counter. This measure will put an end to the brazen circumvention of the Employment Exchange. It seems that at times even the government does not live by its own rules. In the days to come we will be taking a close look at some curious procedures which seem to negate the principles established in the Equal Remuneration Act. The Act has to be enforced — there is no other way.

More recently, as I wrote earlier, I failed to get the educationists of the State to take as seriously as I thought they might, a letter I wrote to each one of them. The other failure, crass no doubt, is that, perhaps due to a question of ego, or perhaps the lack of a holistic attitude at the ministerial and top bureaucracy level, the various departments often tend to function as water-tight compartments, one department often blissfully oblivious or, worse, irresponsibly insensitive to what another department may be pursuing or planning.

I do not by any chance claim to be the model MLA. I do not perceive myself as a great revolutionary or a path-breaking social thinker. On the contrary, I strongly believe that I would have achieved little or nothing if I did not have the humility to learn from mistakes, mine and others, to observe my surroundings, to analyse the situations and endeavour to solve problems as best as I can, rationally, calmly, preferring in all instances the practical to the spectacular. In the pages that follow I will outline the thoughts and dreams that keep me going and striving for excellence, on my part, on the part of all my fellow Goans.



Agenda For Goa

To borrow the punchline of an international giant in the financial world, an agenda is the “fine art of commitment”. I might add that setting an agenda implies a profound knowledge of the region. It has a lot to do with the capacity to analyze, the ability to forecast, the skill to guide. To be humble and circumspect in good times, to be resilient and optimistic in bad times.

My agenda for Goa is not the prescription of an economist for an economy that hasn't picked up though it is blessed with the most favourable factors. Nor is it the corrective course recommended by a social scientist who has studied Goa's ailments, some of them tending to get chronic, and has the answers. I have stated loud and clear in the foregoing that neither am I an economist nor a social scientist, nor a specialist of any kind well versed in theory and academically trained to analyze and synthesize.

My agenda for Goa is *my* dream — a very *personal* dream, a dream, I believe, many other Goans share with me — a dream that one could call a vision, not in the least unrealistic, but a vision that can — and has to be — converted into action and, through action, into reality.

My dream is born from my commitment to Goa, to the society, to the people, but also — and beyond human beings — to the environment, the land, the forests, the beaches, the flora, the fauna, the little cosmos we inherited from our wise and dedicated ancestors who bequeathed it to us in the honest hope that we would preserve

and enrich it and pass it on the next generation and they to the next, *seculo seculorem*.

In the context of Goa, not only does my dream mean the hope of a brighter future, it also means respect for tradition but at the same time, the will to adapt to changing times. And, if necessary, and to me it seems a priority task, to change an entire and obsolete mindset.

I mean, even more crucially, to have the courage to call a spade a spade. To lay blame where it belongs and recognize merit where it is due, fairly and frankly.

In the next chapter I shall outline, with passion — the passion for happiness and progress that has been my constant companion right from my disadvantaged childhood — my thoughts on three areas: the creation in Goa of a new culture; the creation in Goa of a centre of excellence; and the creation in Goa, by Goa, of wealth for Goa and by extension, to the entire country.

At times I nearly despair that this very Goa that is known and admired the world over, as I stated earlier with great pride, as the cradle of intelligentsia, whatever the field — literature, science, medicine, arts, architecture, cuisine, music -- whether eastern or western, discovery and adventure — is today mired in mediocrity and bankruptcy.

My compatriot and role model, the great and immortal Dr. Francisco Luis Gomes had suffered similar disillusionment. He wrote with his pen deeply steeped in anger and sadness. "I ask for my country light and liberty".

In his time, as he told the Portuguese Parliament of which he was the beacon, the higher bureaucracy was more engrossed in designing new uniforms than in schemes for the people's welfare. History seems

to be repeating... But Dr. Gomes had also said, "History is neither vindictive nor flattering. It is just and honest." And it is in that spirit that I view the past and face the future.

In Dr. Gomes' time, the top bureaucracy consisted of Europeans for whom Goa was, if not a punishment posting, the springboard to fatter plums and more princely prebends. Sadly, the top bureaucrats of our times, if their attitudes and actions are any indication, are as alien. Some of them happily are great administrators while others thrive on the sure notion that in PDA, nobody complains. Nobody tries to reverse the trend. At least not so far. And it won't happen until a new, more dynamic, more committed leadership takes into its hands the reins of Goa.

Our administration needs a total overhaul. After 38 years of freedom, and the country's 50 years, we are still following the British system which was created to control India from far. Files go back and forth from dealing hands, up the line, head-clerks, under-secretaries, secretaries, ministers, chief ministers and then back, through the same, long, slow stairway. Isn't it a waste of time? Couldn't a decision once arrived at be fed into a computer for all to know and take note of?

Our officers are taught and trained to tell their minister how best it cannot be done. It is time we re-programmed our officers: to get them to tender advice as follows, "This is the rule, this is how best it can be done". We need transparency of laws and action. Only then will we curb and combat corruption. Only then will the public know their rights and fight for them.

However, if at times Goa's plight depresses me, at times and in fact more often the decrepitude eating into Goa's vitals spurs me to action. In fact, at times I marvel at Goa's luck. There is a worldwide recession. Not very far from us Indonesia is in the throes of bankruptcy.

The Japanese banking system is yet to regain the confidence of investors and depositors. The situation is bleak even in India.

Nevertheless, I cannot but pity Goa. Her rulers haven't given her all she deserves. Our infrastructure is in a shambles. Corruption is gnawing at our entrails.

Goa's basic requirement is a good infrastructure, commensurate to its natural resources and the potential of its manpower. The foresight to plan and the courage and determination to execute the plans are of the essence. The sad truth is that such virtues have been conspicuous by their absence. If before 1961 we could blame our erstwhile colonial masters, we can no longer do so. It is, without a doubt, the leadership that Goa has had since Liberation that is ultimately — if not primarily — responsible for the chaos.

Show me one good road. Show me one single day when the power supply hasn't altogether failed or if not, dangerously fluctuated. And, tragically, no serious thought has been given to building up human resources.

And come to think of it, what we need is absolutely achievable. Were I to prioritize Goa's requirements I would begin with a 100 kms superhighway, in design and efficiency comparable to the best in the most advanced countries of the world. Had we one, one would reach any point of Goa within one hour. The superhighway would have arteries and other roads and constitute a superb network. We would have saved time, energy and fuel. We would enhance our efficiency and productivity.

Yes, we built many roads since Liberation. But show me one which is not sub-standard. We seem to have failed to produce a single engineer capable of building quality highway roads. Our construction, whether

of roads or public buildings, is of dismal quality. The root-cause, obviously, is corruption. It seems to have institutionalized itself at every level of our public works.

We boast in our brochures that we have the highest per capita road mileage in the country. But what is the use if most of them are, for the greater part of the year, in a state of disrepair and hopelessly maintained?

Secondly, we need a very good power supply system. I don't subscribe to the idea of cheap power. Cheap could be expensive. And it is proving to be true in Goa. Not only does our power supply reflect its own inherent inefficiency, it damages and destroys equipment. You just can't think of high quality industries with low quality power. Without it, we will get nowhere. And along with it we must have efficient distribution and transmission systems in place. As of now, our transmission losses account for one fifth of the power we receive. Can you believe it?

I have great dreams. But when I reflect on the state of affairs, I almost despair. How can I execute my plans to set up an electronic park, a software technology park or state-of-the-art industries, if our power supply remains unreliable? As of now, when it doesn't fail altogether it fluctuates and upsets schedules. Charge more, I say. And the industry will willingly pay and be grateful.

The third concomitant of good planning is a reliable water supply system. We get from Mother Nature 120 inches of water every year. And what do we do with it? We let it drain into the sea. Had we converted the State of Goa, within its geographical boundaries, into a reservoir of water we would not only have a gigantic swimming pool, but also a diving pool, three metres deep. As of now we only have

taps running dry.

We still can — and indeed must — harness the rainfall. We will have plenty to drink and wash. We will even have enough to supply industries and earn substantial revenue. At the industrial estates we operate e.g. Madkai, Kundai, the entrepreneurs tell me, "We'll pay, but give it to us". As of now, they carry it in tankers. At a Cabinet meeting when a nominal hike was proposed, my reaction was, "Charge even more, but assure regular supply".

We could use water in a different way as well. For transportation. Water transport is one of the most efficient systems of transportation. It was Goa's best system, till we made of our river navigation what it is. It has gone to the dogs. And no one seems to bother. We could — and must — improve it. Soonest! We could even go for ultramodern options like hydrofoils. We could then do in minutes what now takes hours. No doubt, it would cost a lot more. Those who can afford it — and there will be many — will gladly avail of the option. Those who can't, will still have the Kadamba buses and other private buses to ferry them.

We are blessed with a very good airport. And a superb seaport. Access to either of those gateways to prosperity, sadly, is difficult and a hindrance.

My differences with the Chief Minister simmered over a detail which I believe is vital to Goa's progress and happiness. As the state's Industries minister, I was expected to attract entrepreneurs and cast my net far and wide. The effort was largely successful, but to be sustainable it had to be based on credible assumptions. The least one had to assure intending entrepreneurs is that one had in place the necessary infrastructure, and, if one lagged behind in some respects,

one had credible plans to overcome the handicaps. But, frankly, could I say this? I might have imposed on them the condition of using local manpower. But it had to match the entrepreneurs' requirements. Did they? Our education system is quite simply pathetic. In our over-anxiety to promote literacy we have gone about lowering the standard of education. The education we deliver is not in the least job-oriented. We must reorient education. I was working on a new education policy when I resigned. I shall get back to it. And I will also deal with other areas; essential in my view to the creation of a new culture, the creation of a centre of excellence and creation of wealth, not only for Goa, but for the whole nation.

I could go on and on. To mention another case in point. Environment is our greatest and most cherished asset. I have turned down several, sizable industrial projects because they could, even if minimally, damage our ecosystems. But what do we see in other spheres? We have a surfeit of PDAs and at the apex a Town Planning Board which, at least on paper, are supposed to guide and control building activities in the State, and where necessary, severely punish infractions and infringements. But do we, really? We seem to have made a set of rules to follow. And we seem to have another, parallel set of rules, for the benefit of those who might have broken them to 'regularize', as the jargon goes. As a result, we have 'farm houses' that, in fact, are palaces. Incredibly, one 'farm house' is actually a super-luxury hotel. And it is in the process of being 'regularized'. Can all this go on? And on? Mustn't we do something about it? But can we, in the existing ambience of lack of sincerity? Where ethics has come to mean: you close your eyes to my trespasses and I'll close mine to yours?

Our other problem, as stated, is the prevailing mindset. Liberation heralded a new era. Of equality of opportunity. But somewhere along the line we seem to have mistaken anarchy for revolution. We seem to

have adopted false notions of prestige. One of them was to abhor manual labour. We have, as a result, given up the trades and crafts we were so excellent at. We had the finest masons in the region. The most accomplished carpenters and blacksmiths. They seem to have all but deserted their traditional trades and, instead, gone for white collar jobs. Nature abhors vacuum and the vacuum left by them was promptly filled by the hordes of migrants who flocked to Goa and by now have made our land theirs. Now over 40 per cent of the State's population consists of migrants who have settled in Goa. Mahatma Gandhi said, "India's wealth is in the villages". It was very much so in Goa. We must restore the importance and usefulness of our villages.

Identifying problems, some of them almost chronic by now, would be the first step for anyone interested in setting up an agenda for this lovely and unique Goa that we inherited from our ancestors, who lavished on it all their love, and we must, one day, not too far, hand over to our children. But there are other positive tasks to focus on. I have tried, in my own way.

I also realized, when I was Law Minister, that, somehow, litigation had reached an unmanageable volume in the State. One way to ease it was, in my mind, to increase the number of trial courts, where the backlog of cases is the heaviest. In the few months I was the Law Minister the number of trial courts were raised from 22 to 44.

Then, there was one community in particular which was bearing the brunt of our misplaced emphasis: the Goan aborigines, the Gawdas, the Velips, the Jhalmis, the Kunbis, the Dhangars, once the proud owners of this land before the Aryans arrived, before the Portuguese arrived. It pains me that we have been so insensitive to their plight; so arrogant, so utterly ungrateful to those people. It is they who kept and keep our land green, who replenished our forests; who kept our rivers flowing,

who desilted village ponds, who have with their intelligence and understanding of the processes of nature built eco-friendly *khazan* lands, sluice gates and an intricate network of dykes and *bunds*, with a level of ingenuity and intelligence that the early Portuguese thought matched the wizardry of the builders of the dykes of Flanders. I am duty-bound to bring to the notice of the Goan public the plight of those forgotten and forsaken primal Goans.

The OBCs of Goa, the primal Goans really, constitute 30 per cent of the State's population. Tragically, they are the most neglected, the most harassed. They were always dominated and oppressed by the higher classes and once reduced to bonded labourers.

Theirs had been a never-ending struggle when I decided to understand their problems and work with them. I am justly proud that the leaders of the movement reposed their faith in me and selected me as the President of the *Gawda Vikas Mandal* in 1980. I would, they were confident, catalyze the energies of the incipient movement and give them a meaningful direction. It hardly matters that I do not belong to the community. But I am glad that, partly because of my humble support, they now have more muscle and teeth. As an MLA, I got them the OBC status, half, way, so to speak, to their recognition as Scheduled Tribes; five per cent reservation for admission to educational institutions and two per cent for jobs. As a minister I succeeded in getting cabinet approval to include the communities in the Scheduled Tribes.

I organized for them two *Free Legal Aid Melas* to give them a chance to clear very old cases involving tenancy and mundkar conflicts. The *melas* were attended by more than ten thousand people. I also organized conventions all over Goa under the Free Legal Aid Board which I then chaired. To pursue the demands effectively, all the organization of the backward communities were merged into one under the flag of

Goa State Scheduled Tribes Union. Again, they reposed their faith in me and appointed me their Action Committee Chairman. Their further progress must figure in any responsible agenda for the future.

Their immediate demands are :

- To issue a notification under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution to declare communities Scheduled Tribes.
- To conduct a survey of the communities.
- To grant a minimum of 30 per cent reservations in all fields.

I gladly participated in their struggle, and happily had some success. I was instrumental in forming the OBC Corporation, getting them five per cent reservation for professional colleges and two percent reservation for employment in government offices.

The movement is apolitical. It is a powerful movement, exemplarily peaceful till now. But the communities are understandably getting restive. It will be foolish to ignore their just demands. It will be even more foolish to take for granted their patience and humility.

Let us, now, change our sights from the past to the future.

Even at the cost of repetition, I will re-state that I am not an authority on development. or, for that matter, sociology. My critics will be absolutely right if they detect in the flow of my thoughts a certain lack of organization. Indeed, I am intuitive. I have no other desire but to provide in the lines I am penning below material that, hopefully, will spur their interest in Goa and excite their mind and intelligence, and, finally, prompt them to invest in Goa their knowledge and expertise. I shall be looking forward to their prescriptions for Goa.

Fresh winds of change are blowing all around us. We have to assess and decide what our strengths are, and what our weaknesses and, then,

restructure our thoughts and adapt ourselves to the challenges.

In many ways, whether planning for Goa, or in several other spheres of my life, my attitude reflects the lessons taught to me by my mother in my early life. Work culture, work ethics and, above all, discipline. The first thing she taught me was dignity of labour. Never to be ashamed of soiling my hands if the work I was involved in so required. That indeed should be the philosophy and attitude of anyone drawing an agenda for Goa.

We live, of course, in different times. Information technology (IT) has shortened distances. It has accessed progress as never before. A small example. Not long ago, Indians, with their superior intelligence were in great demand, worldwide, as software professionals. Today, Swiss Air are producing all their software in their Mumbai facility. It does not make sense any more to import Indian manpower when they can produce the best in their own habitat. All that is needed is a *connection*.

When the Government of India embarked in 1991 on a historic course; to open the Indian economy and liberalize constraints on industry and services, the suggested role-models were Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea, the "Asian Tigers" as they were known. Since then, all that remains of those success stories is the nagging thought that their failure, in a none-too-distant future, had all along been implicit, but just wished away.

Nevertheless, the most critical part of the liberalization process will remain the rescinding of several government controls, including location controls and, in terms of policy and implementation the independence of State governments. States are now competing with each other for attracting investment and particularly free direct investment.

If we are to make Goa the most successful state we would have to clearly understand the possible areas where we could compete and develop our infrastructure and policies, and an ability to fund our development activities, independent of grants from the Central Government. The truth is that Goa is bereft of funds because we have failed, so far, to demand and get what is, by right, ours. We gloat over the fact that our Mormugao Port is the highest earner of foreign exchange, from the revenues earned on the exports of iron ore. But, what do we get out of it? Nothing! Just nothing — apart from deforestation, pollution, dust at mine sites and while the ore is in transit, and, worse, the siltation caused by the rejects, and chest diseases to the workers who inhale the dust. Look at Assam. They claimed — and it is important -- got royalty on oil mined in their soil. They also get their due share on the tea they produce. Yet, they are clamouring for more and, with their land of methodology and persistence, may well succeed in a not-too-distant future. Our forex earnings constitute, in fact, an untapped source of funds we must avail ourselves of immediately. Why just abjectly beg, when we could — and — demand what is our!

Goa's great strength acknowledged unanimously by economists and planners will be in the service sector. We have an enviable natural and man-made-environment. We also have a unique life-style that could well be the best means to attract services.

An instance comes to mind. The 1980s saw a rapid change in the location of economic activity in the Developed World. When investors considered where to locate new investments in services, they started to consider a factor which had, until then, been ignored — life-style. Areas which were nice places to work in, in terms of quality of life, became the most sought after locations. This was possible largely due

to the increase in telecommunication services which allowed corporates to effectively communicate with the major centres without actually being there. For instance, one of the biggest financial trading houses in America was Princeton Newport, which had one office in Princeton, New Jersey and another in Newport Beach, California — neither in the financial capital of New York. Telecommunications allowed Princeton Newport to effectively obtain all the information necessary for their trading activities, communicate between their two offices and carry out trade without physically being present. That could be made to happen in Goa, too.

The services which started to spread themselves in this manner were Finance, Information Technology, Media, Advertising and Design facilities. Each has a similar set of infrastructural requirements. We predicated the imperatives earlier in this chapter, when we reviewed the appalling condition of our infrastructure.

Goa has other attributes which make it an ideal location for attracting life-style services — high seasonal rainfall being a key component. The rainfall, as we stated, can be effectively tapped to provide year-round water supply and to generate power for peak demand requirements. Additionally, the port facilities which have been developed for exporting iron ore can also be used for importing fuel for power generation for base-load demand requirements. It is definitely possible for Goa to provide continuously high quality power and water. Goa has the highest state-wide per capita income and the second highest literacy levels and, therefore, among the several models one could choose for Goa, some economists opine that the model of San Francisco Bay would be ideal. Located on the West Coast of the United States, it is close to the newly emerging markets of East Asia. It provides an excellent location for the types of industries it attracts — information technology, media, finance and research and development. Goa is

similarly well situated.

Another advantage Goa has is that it is small and easily manageable, in fact it is more like a large, well spreadout city comprising independent administrative fragments: panchayats, talukas and districts.

Offshore banking would be yet another tantalizing prospect. The primary quality one looks for when searching for a good bank office location is good quality commercial and residential premises at a reasonable price. Goa's real estate is considerably lower than levels established in the major metros of the country, and hence would be well positioned here.

Trading operations would additionally require access to trading floors, or in the case of Foreign Exchange trading, Reserve Bank of India permission and support infrastructure to do so. Front offices would require head offices of their clients, i.e. manufacturing companies, to be in their near proximity. This could only be a long-term goal for Goa.

If information technology is one ideal area to prospect as we suggested earlier, and develop, perhaps to compete with Bangalore, Media is yet another area. The Media industry can be broken up into Movies, Music and the new growth area of CD-ROMs and information highway-related products. But the Movie industry requires specialized infrastructure and as of now, in this respect, Goa's would be a long-term objective.

The music industry has a similar set of requirements. However, given that Goa already has some base of musicians and sound engineers, as well as a good life-style base, it could be able to attract this industry in a world context. This would be especially true if it builds a strong industry in finance and information technology, important inputs into this industry. This could, hence, be a short to medium-term objective.

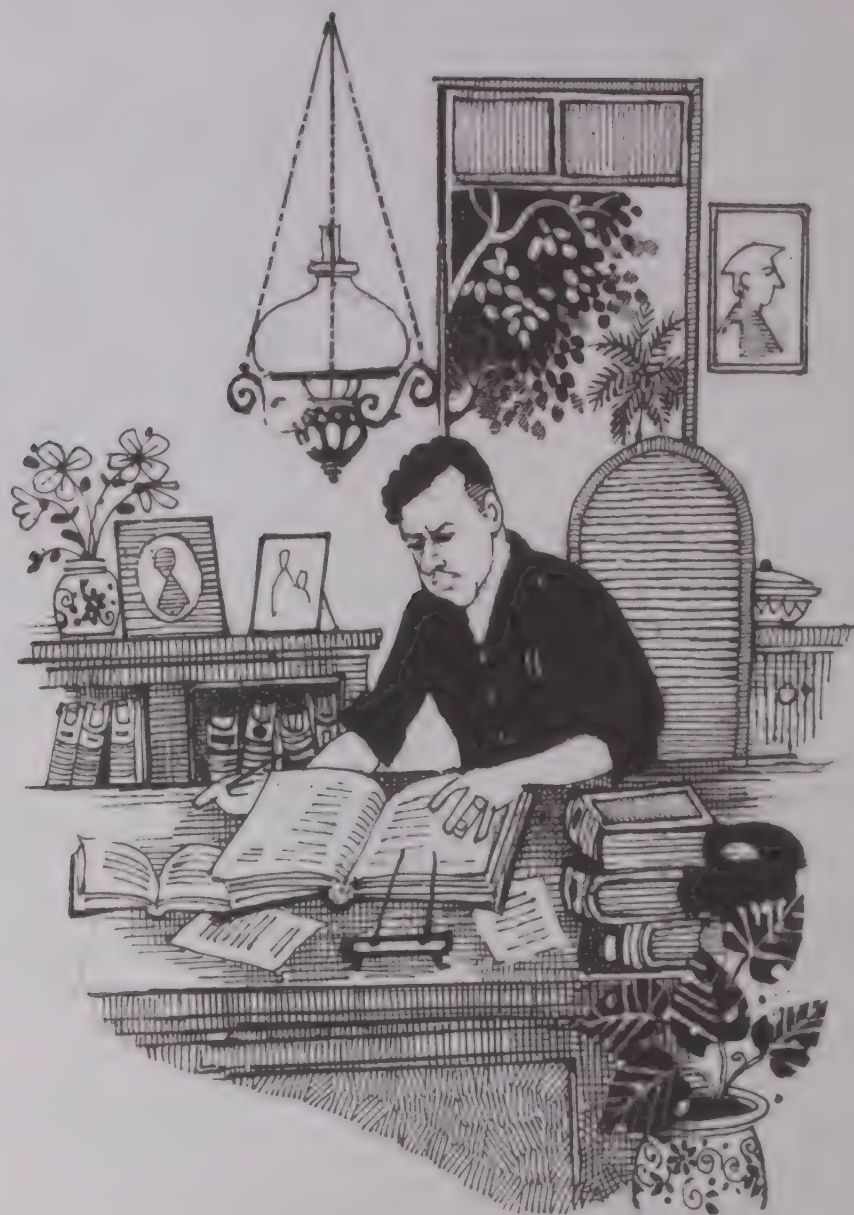
Information technology-related Media, which is the fastest growing segment of this industry, is possibly the easiest entry point for Goa in this segment worldwide. Goa's success here would be highly dependent on its ability to attract information technology investments.

Finally, perhaps, we could go in for research and design. Manufacturing companies invest large amounts of money in research and development locations. With the opening up of the Indian economy and the emergence of much of the Third World, there is a growing need for facilities in a developing country with the correct life-style inputs as well as access to a pool of skilled professional labour.

The areas we sketched out earlier would be in many ways innovative. There are other areas which we once excelled at which is one reason why Goa, as Muhammed Gawan, the Persian soldier and strategist wrote in 1453, "is the envy of all Indian ports". As a result, he goaded his king, the Bhamani Sultan Muhammed II to conquer Goa. He was astonished at the number of rivers, the wealth of the forests, the abundance of crops of all kinds.

Agriculture was our first love. And we must revert to it. Don't tell me that agriculture is on the decline. If yes, that is all the more reason to revive it. We hear all too often that, if democracy fails, what is needed is more democracy. So, too, with agriculture.

Will we have to change our mindset? Why not? Give me one good reason !



Replanting Men

I read a Chinese proverb somewhere:

If you want to plan for a year, plant corn

If you want to plan for 30 years, plant a tree.

But if you want to plan for 100 years, plant men.

As I reach the end of this book, it strikes me that we in Goa now must perhaps replant the men who not so long ago did us proud in Goa and beyond and we seem to have unwittingly but nevertheless distressingly forgotten as our role models. They had stood on solid foundations for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, all through the history of our land and through the years of plenty and the years of want, the years of glory and even the years of subjugation.

They were men and women of great character and an indomitable will. They were a sturdy lot, committed to the highest values. They had pride in their work. They were perfectionists, whatever their chosen field of activity. They were so many, almost incredibly hailing from such a small land with a population barely half-a-million. And they made a mark in India, indeed in the world. In the most diverse fields. As we recalled earlier, a Goan, Abbe Faria was the first man to prove that hypnotism could be used as therapy. Till then it was an obscure science, if such it was, known as mesmerism on which, by large and large, charlatans thrived. Peaceful as Goans are, their land gave India some of its best thinking generals. Madhav Mautri, the famous strategist of the Vijaynagar empire was one of the greatest.

I was lucky to have a mother who inculcated in me from a very tender age, at times with words that then sounded harsh to me, that I had to work hard. Only hard work would see me through life. Else, I would perish. All I had to do was to learn well, because only learning could advance my prospects in life. I was thus fortunate to imbibe my work culture, literally at my mother's breast. Not all Goans of my age and time, and even fewer as time went by were as lucky as I was, which is perhaps how and why people like me have an immense sense of pride in our humble beginnings, because it is that kind of humility that spurred us to greater achievements. It gave us a sense of purpose, a sense of direction. To go up and up, at least try to, was — and is — our motto.

At times I am asked, indeed I ask myself, if I have achieved my goal in life. The answer is: I haven't — yet. If I must strive again to be the chief minister of the State to achieve the yet unrealized objectives of my agenda, so will I. And I will try it on the premise that as of now, Goans deserve much more than they are getting from their government. So help me God!

The thoughts outlined in this chapter are on the assumption, correct in my view, that the leadership of the State needs a total reorientation. The way I see things, we have had in the last 38 years governments led by various leaders, of different political labels. In actual fact, however the system and philosophy of governance have remained the same, rooted always in the policies and schemes of the central government, whichever the party or coalition in power. Our legislation has been largely borrowed from neighbouring Maharashtra. The result has been a total lack of ingenuity, a total lack of innovativeness, even and worse, total inappropriateness. Why, let us pause to ask, would what is presumed to be good for Maharashtra, be it for the regulation of local self-government bodies or for that matter for land tenancy reforms, be

equally good for Goa? Isn't Goa so absolutely different? In its history? Its ethos? The collective thinking and attitudes of its people? Wouldn't we require different solutions, tailor-made to our requirements? To our longstanding social and economic problems?

I am aware that an autobiography, any autobiography, is by tradition, almost by definition, the story of one's life. Of lived situations, shared experiences. Not, generally, the pulpit to expound theories and pontificate. But I thought that after identifying the problems and the crises we presently are battling, I would, in all fairness, be expected by the reader to suggest the way to solve them. And that is what I am setting out to do and, in all humility, submit myself to the judgement of my contemporaries, even of my peers in governance and out of it.

I feel we must forge a new work culture. The sooner, the better. Right now, in fact !

Sadly, many of my contemporaries and their parents tend to mistake education and literacy for what they ought to never be. Surely, education and literacy are the seeds that will sow prosperity. Indeed they will eventually put an end to inequality and poverty and the drudgery that goes with it. But the whole purpose of education I will keep saying again and again, will be defeated if the educated unemployed develop a contempt for manual work. If the educated are foolish enough to grant themselves the luxury of false pride, to develop a sense of arrogance, that they must not soil their hands. And rather idle away their time and become parasitic.

That, precisely, is what is happening in Goa. We must, therefore, develop a new work culture or rather reinstate the culture that was ours. Time was when Goan landowners worked their fields together with their hired farm hands. In fact, the principle was well established in our millennial comunidades that share-croppers and hired hands

were in fact entitled to a share of the comunidade's profits, *the kulasher zzon*. It was a proud privilege.

One might be asked, "Can we change our work culture?" My answer is: Yes, I am positive of it. Because I tried, experimentally, in my Navelim constituency. I must, however, admit that not all of my moves succeeded, but one can and in fact must learn from failures. And that I have.

Let us make Goa a centre of excellence. We were once. Why not return to that position of glory?

We seem to have lost our pride in perfection. We must strive to make Goa, once again, a centre of excellence. Our masons erected all the churches of Old Goa which are now listed by UNESCO as priceless heritage monuments. It is our, own jewellers who crafted the magnificent silver cast of St. Francis Xavier. Our musicians were in great demand in all the luxury cruises of their times and they also dominated the entertainment scene in India, Burma, Sri Lanka and Singapore. Practically every Indian maharaja took great pride in hiring a Goan to lead his state's band. Most of them were draped by Goan master tailors. Our chefs were famous worldwide. One attended on Queen Elizabeth II, then just married, and on her royal visit in 1952, to Africa and Asia. Our doctors helped eradicate the sleeping disease in far away São Thome. Also the deadly epidemic of in the 1920s in Bombay. Our Goans started and gifted the nation three of the most successful Indian banks, the Syndicate, the Canara and the Corporation. I could go on and on...

Why can't we encore those performances? Why? Ours is the age of technocracy. There are jobs going abegging the world over. Yet, in Goa our manpower finds itself sandwiched between the hordes of migrant workers taking up the manual jobs that our youth spurn and

the highly skilled technocrats we have been importing in fairly large numbers for the specialized jobs for which they, the local youth, lack the skills.

I tried, albeit in a small way, to break the impasse. I created the Goa Tool Room Centre in Kundaim. It is one of the best of its kind in the country. It is a UN-supported institution. The training facilities are very good. No wonder the students are picked up by the industry, at premium wages even before they pass out. The Software Technology Park, the Human Resources Development Foundation and the Information Technology Foundation, likewise, are an affirmation of my quest for excellence. We also have an Institute of Safety, Health and Environment. It is rated as one of the best faculties in India. Indeed, it was a pioneering venture.

All those institutions and the other I have on the drawing board, are but expressions of my basic philosophy. Encourage private initiative. Create the conditions for it to grow and thrive. Government should confirm itself to the role of a facilitator. Because government lacks the aptitude and the will to run business and industry. Look, if you need proof, at what has happened at Selaulim, our largest irrigation project which is taking decades to be completed. Initially it was budgeted at a few crores. We have by now sunk into it over hundreds of crores and we'll have to sink more till it is ready -- if it ever gets ready. As of now the cost of land irrigated by Selaulim is in the region of Rs. 2, 000 per square metre. Can one afford agriculture at such heavy cost? Look at our bridges; the inordinate time they take to get built - and, look, also, how fast they fall. Look, also, at our roads. They are uneven and bumpy, full of potholes, a shame. Why? Because the system we have devised in the immense bureaucratic wisdom of governments is one vulnerable to corruption. If private entrepreneurs are allowed to build and operate, they will build them to earn profits. In their

enlightened self-interest they will also deliver quality work.

When Julian Lincoln Simon, the optimistic if controversial economist, died in February, the facet most remembered by the obituary writers was his faith in people. He had written in 1981 in *The Ultimate Resource*, perhaps his most discussed book: "The Ultimate Resource is people, spirited and hopeful people who will exert their will and imaginations for their own benefit, and so, inevitably, for the benefit of all." That had been the experience of mankind since the Garden of Eden was created by God and there was no reason why it should not continue indefinitely.

We saw it happen in the 1950s in Europe. World War II had ended a few years earlier. Germany had been crushed. Britain shared the ecstasy of victory along with the other allies. Yet, West Germany's economy was blossoming, while Britain's was floundering. It was, however, neither a puzzle nor a mystery. The West Germans had the will and knew the way. The British, on the other hand, lacked the will and the leadership. Soon enough, they voted out of power their Tory war heroes and replaced them by a Labour government. But that was no solution either, because statism was the option taken by the Labour government and in their theoretical priorities created new road blocks on the path to progress. Decades later, in the 1990s, the British Labour Party returned to power on a revised and liberal economic policy. And they seem to be doing well for themselves and their country.

Years of regulated economy, first under the colonial rulers and later by national governments pursuing the lofty, but fallacious, goals of statism, have given the people, nowhere perhaps as much as in India — and within India in Goa — the realization that wealth instead of being created was really squandered by government after government. The citizen had no role in governance in that kind of

regulated economy. There simply wasn't the competitiveness and progress that a free market economy generally generates.

Sadly, we have been brought up in the belief that wealth is a dirty word. Whatever the religion, it guarantees the kingdom of heaven to the poor, the dispossessed, the marginalised and stipulates that it will be more difficult for a rich man to pass through the gates of heaven than for a camel through the eye of a needle. Yet, we know that without money even religions could not have prospered. There is, therefore, something hypocritical about the moral condemnation of creation of wealth. Certainly, wealth should not be hoarded, because, if it is, it would remain unused. And time will devalue it. Wealth has to be created to be used, to produce more wealth.

I define wealth as a two-fold asset. It has a material aspect but it also has another aspect, as a human resource. I have dwelt on this aspect in the foregoing, in my advocacy of the need to create in Goa a Centre of Excellence. Some of the collateral aspects were dealt with when I dwelt on the need to create a new work culture. Indeed, one leads to the other: a sound work culture to good standards of excellence and eventually to creation of new levels of collective wealth.

Indeed, India's, and certainly Goa's, greatest potential wealth is its population, its inexhaustible human resource. Where else do you find such diversity and such a rich fund of collective wisdom? We have all types of human beings in India: Aryans and Dravidians, descendants of the Mongoloids and the Negroid, the man God created yesterday in the heart of the Andaman forests, elsewhere the hybrid who evidences the passage, through our land, of people who came to it from the world over, such being the fame we had, as a people who had a gr at civilization, who possessed enormous material resources, a land so ample and diverse, that it was — and is — a universe by itself. The

world's highest peak, some of the most extensive and fertile plains, some of the planet's largest rivers, mines bearing gold, diamonds, iron, manganese, dense and rich forests, all kinds of climates, from the temperate to the desertic — that is India.

Yet, if I may borrow a thought I read elsewhere, "The vastness of our population lives in an ocean of poverty amid islands of prosperity". Human resource, our greatest asset, is thus become the source of our collective poverty, the reason of our underdevelopment. In the land of some of the world's most sumptuous palaces, millions live in subhuman conditions, without a shelter over their heads, in slums, sprawled on footpaths amid dirt and squalor, vulnerable to disease and worse, helplessly propagating it.

Goa is also rich in resources, both human and natural. Our culture is millennial, our heritage one of the most refined.. Yet, there is poverty. Yet, there is social discrimination. We still revel in our casteist pretensions. We still confuse intolerance for assertion of rights. On paper, however, ours is a welfare state. The Directive Principles of our Constitution prescribe "*Konuch Nennar urcho nuin, Konuch beker urcho nuin ani konuch gorib urcho nuin*" - no illiteracy, no unemployment, no poverty in other words. But, pray, what do we see all around us ?

The earlier we realize that it is in the creation of wealth that lies the key to our redemption the better it will be for us, the region, and indeed the world. And wealth does not have to be created by governments. You and I can do it. Shall we try?

Alfred Sloan, the founder of General Motors and Henry Ford, the inventor of mass production, created wealth for themselves, and the world. So did, albeit in a more limited context, our own Tatas and Birlas and Ambanis and Goenkas.

So should each one of us. Because we can! Because we must! Aren't we Indians, the inventors of the zero and, therefore, modern mathematics, in the least disgusted at being now the world's best known beggars? Aren't we Goans, whose capital city of *Cidade de Goa* rivalled London and Antwerp ashamed that we are now reduced to selling cheap manpower in the world's more advanced economies because, at home, we have no takers?

How do we ensure for the people, well-being, happiness and prosperity?

On paper, as we have seen, Goa has very impressive economic indicators: the lowest death rate, the highest per capita income, a very high literacy rate, blah, blah, blah... Yet, a large number of our youth are ready to mortgage their house and estate, pawn the family's jewellery, beg and borrow, steal if inevitable, to secure a job in the Gulf, risking, often enough, being cheated by unscrupulous and crooked job agents and finally landing in jail as illegal immigrants in the host country and being repatriated in veritable cattle boats? And the kind of jobs? Often as menials, as actors, as construction workers — the very jobs they had were beneath dignity in their own land.

Why? O why?

One of the reasons why India, and we in Goa within it, remain backward is the political system, primarily the politicians' *modus operandi*. If only the politicians had thought of raising the thinking and action of their constituents to the highest level possible, instead of lowering their own sights and targets in the ill-concerned pursuit of identity of thought and communion of interests!!

There is, let us re-emphasize it in clear terms, a difference between hoarding money for oneself and creating wealth for oneself and the

nation. What the politicians have been doing is merely eternalizing misery. While they claim that they are for the poor, they do their damnest to keep them poor, lest, if they become economically independent, they repudiate their political leaders or compete with them. We have mentioned individuals and families who have created wealth for themselves and others. Whereas there are others who will not be named for the most obvious reasons and do nothing but use and consume the wealth created by others. We call it socialism !

We have to believe and propagate that creation of wealth is a constructive and creative activity. It involves intelligence, drive, risk, struggle, and, with luck, it will result in achievement. Ultimately, any wealth created is wealth for the nation.

There is, of course, another category of people whose passion is to control the wealth others take the trouble to create, like government and other state-operated bodies. To consume or control wealth needs no special qualifications. And such people are the ones who fatten themselves at the expense of the intended, but in fact cheated, beneficiaries of official schemes.

Luckily, it has been realized that the whole economic philosophy has to change. That the Indian economy has to be liberalized. That it has to be globalised. And happily, new winds of change are sweeping across the country. With the structural changes in the Indian economy — from regulated to free economy — there has been some tinkering with the state's economic policy but we are yet to have in place a cogent financial policy or a credible industrial policy. We have had a period of political instability at the Centre that has led to coalitions of convenience that in turn are guided by one single obsession: survival at any cost.

We are yet to harness private initiative and let private enterprise

and the private citizen to form centre-stage and the main promoters of progress and assign government its logical role, as a 'facilitator' - that is all !

How one wishes that it had been understood and accepted that there is nothing immoral about creating and enhancing wealth. Because wealth comes from one's faith in one's vision, a faith rooted firmly in one's love of humanity. That wealth is an instrument not of oppression, but, on the contrary, of freedom, freedom from hunger, freedom from poverty, from illiteracy. That wealth is a vehicle for achieving one's dreams.

Wealth for me is not mere material for vainglory, but an opportunity for achievement. it is no disgrace to acknowledge poverty but it is a real degradation to make no effort to overcome it. On the other hand, riches are not an end in life, but an instrument of life.

If we reckon the failures and learn from them, success may be well within our reach.

For me, in Goa, every bit of wealth I had a hand in creating gives me immense satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment.

I have, within the existing limitations, my own no less than those of the prevalent system, created the institutions and structures that can — indeed must — catalyze the creation of wealth I have set up.

I have briefly reviewed some of them in the foregoing pages. These institutions could turn into the jewels the state and the nation could possess and adorn themselves with. Truly I have made an all out effort to promote Goa's industrialization. When I took over Industries in 1995 the total investment in industry was Rs. 600 crore. The state had taken all the 30 years since its liberation and over 400 years of its

geographical identity to achieve that level. Today, we have projects worth nearly Rs. 2,000 crore off the ground. We also have project worth Rs 7,000 crore in the pipeline. If all of them materialize Goa will overtake the national as well as world records in prevailing in industrial investment and output. When America and the Western world are in two minds in their intention of disciplining India and imposing economic sanctions and the country's economy is facing difficulties, when the world itself is undergoing the pangs of recession, Goa, one is happy to note, and emphasize, has been undergoing a remarkable, albeit silent, revolution.

The existing industries as have already created thousands of additional jobs. Those many jobs, if seen in the perspective of forward and backward linkages and integration, what one calls ancillary industries, actually mean that we will have soon achieved more than 100 per cent employment.

That is the finest goal we - you and I- could set ourselves : hundred per cent employment in Goa for Goans. By Goans, to the extent possible.

You and I can do it, if we decide we must do it braving all odds, defying and if necessary ignoring all destructive criticism.



‘Valeu A Pena ?’

Use Portuguese words for the heading of this last chapter of my book. It is a line borrowed from Fernando Pessoa, rated as Portugal's greatest poet since Luis de Camões and in the opinion of some as great and, certainly, the best known and most translated. Pessoa asks the question in his celebration in verse of the Portuguese maritime adventure of the sixteenth century, *Mensagem*. The odyssey had its dark side : war, strife, death. It had widowed young women, orphaned little children. Was it worth it? ‘*Valeu a Pena ?* And the answer was : *tudo vale a pena/ se a alma não é pequena*. All is worth, if the soul is not petty.

I often fantasize that my mother must have asked that same question, in her native Konkani, on, of the day when she was hit by a truck, while she was on her way, as on every day of her life, to the ward chapel to say her evening prayers. That is the question that must have been on her lips and mind as her life ebbed out as she lay bleeding on the kerb, helpless and hopeless.

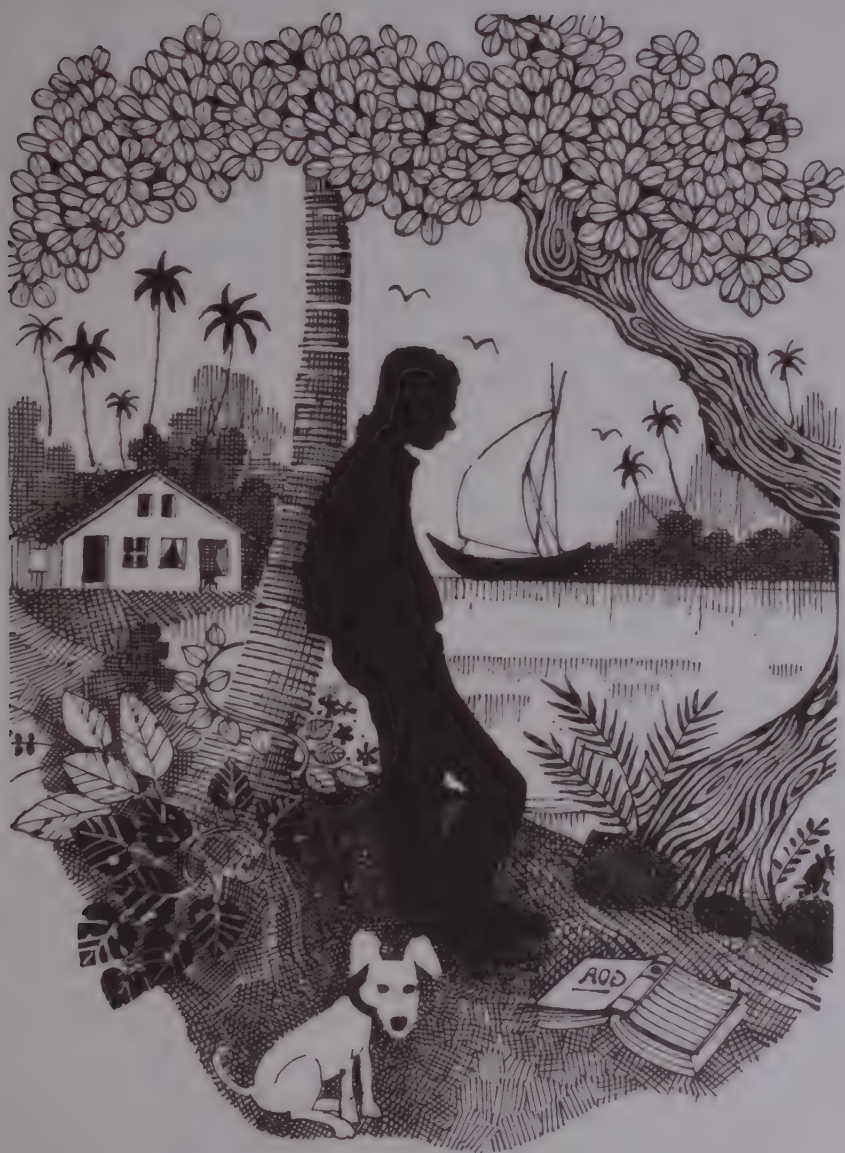
I would like to believe that like Pessoa, she thought it was well worth it. She had raised a family, given each child all she could afford, the best possible. She had toiled from dawn to well past dusk. She had spread the gospel, through example. Through courage. Through her unshakable belief in virtue and diligence. I, a child she at one stage feared might go astray, had, eventually, matched her expectations. Perhaps exceeded them. And so, she probably died a happy person. Her life's problems, the difficulties, the none-too-few anxieties and

disappointments had all been well worth it. So she would tell her Creator and thank Him for His compassion, generosity and His inspiration.

Inevitably, I will recall, yet again, whatever hazy memories I have, and in some measure shared earlier with you, of my father's funeral. I recall the sweet words, the caresses, the looks of sympathy of relatives and neighbours who came to share with us our sadness and distress. On that day, I was in a way happy that so many persons were so nice to us. It is only many years later I realized that all those persons were not only mourning my father's death, but also commiserating with my mother and with me, and the rest of my immediate family. How would she bring me up and my siblings? What kind of future awaited me? Would it would be bleak? They, perhaps, anticipated that ours was a story of doom foretold. With luck, they, probably, figured out, I might land a job overseas or on board an ocean-going ship, as had so many of our co-villagers. Most of them had done well for themselves as had and still do - the celebrated Goan *tavotti*. I am sure that none of them would have anticipated, even in the wildest dreams, that the same orphan boy, Luizinho, son of Joaquim would, one day, represent his village and the villages around in Goa's Legislative Assembly, that he would fight for the people's rights, get their grievances redressed, do his best to improve the quality of their life, would, eventually, become a minister and author some progressive policies and endeavour to do his best for their — and his — Goa. And through that effort, do his best for Mother India.

How could they have even thought of it, if Goa's Liberation itself was, for most of them, an impossible dream? A forbidden dream in fact!

I was in many ways a fortunate son. But for my mother I perhaps might never have achieved whatever I have. Nor would I have the



ambition to go higher and do better and the moral courage to learn from my mistakes and re-route my thoughts and activities.

I was equally lucky in deciding at a very early age - we were hardly 18 - that Rachelle was the woman of my destiny. We were intensely in love - but nothing torrid about it - and we realized that we were a couple made for each other. We were neighbours. We knew each other since we were children. We grew up together. Ours was one of those 'amne samne' romances. Knowing well our weaknesses and strengths and importantly, constructively critical of each other.

I learnt to view life from points of view other than mine. In my then work-place when I took up a job with Zuari. Later, as a union leader when I negotiated better compensation packages for my comrades with the employers. Or as a social worker when fighting for the rights of the poor and disadvantaged. Soon as a politician, as a politician in the opposition to begin with and as a politician in power. That is how I learnt to temper enthusiasm with equanimity. Then to be reasonable. To be willing to consider points of view opposed to mine and well ... if I was wrong about it, to admit it without any qualities.

I was to learn with Rachelle other lessons in life. I had a job now, a good job for the time and we decided to marry. The date would be August 26 (1977), my birthday, in fact my 26th birthday. Within a year, our first son was born. We named him Lenin (after my then hero), Joaquim (after my father). He looked more like his mother than me. And, as he grew, the similarity became all too obvious. He is learning architecture and seems to be thoroughly enjoying it. He has his mother's ability to see things calmly. To take time to decide, but once decided to be firm and single-minded in the pursuance of his goals. And in this, probably, he takes after me as well.

When our Ravi, our fond diminutive for Rabindranath (after my

favourite poet), Joel (after his godfather), was born two years later, on October 5, 1980, the pressures of my work had begun to take their toll. Financially, we were quite comfortable, but time was the problem. There were thousand odd jobs to attend to. Union negotiations, charters-of-demand to draft, meetings, speeches. And where was the time? Only Rachelle could devise the way to instill method in the madness and effectively run the house, look after the two boys and give a semblance of order to my own work. She maintained my diary, reminded me of my appointments, administered with prudence and judiciously money matters. She was my private and social secretary, my home minister and my finance minister, all rolled in one brilliantly. She was an exceptionally good mother. She also proved herself an affectionate daughter-in-law. She and my mother had been friends, their immense faith in their religion a very strong link between them, even before she married me.

My mother and Rachelle were as different from each other, to use a rather prosaic metaphor, as cheese from chalk. My mother was a disciplinarian. She would be and often was harsh. My school mates had stories to tell. How their fathers disciplined them. It was the cordial principle of education then to spare the rod if one wanted to spoil the child. It was their mothers who intervened to save them if the punishment exceeded tolerable limits. So, as far as I was concerned, my mother was all I had. And was she hard-hitting?... Rachelle's methods of persuasion, even censure, are totally different.

As time went by, she had to take on other jobs to prevent chaos from totally engulfing us. I had got into real estate and made some good money. At another stage, I thought I would try my luck as a hotelier. And all along I pursued my great passion: politics. Modesty apart, whatever I tried I nearly always succeeded. My hotel *Kesarval Motels* and *Holiday Homes* on the National Highway 17, half-way between

Panaji and Margao, and also Vasco and Ponda, a strategic location indeed probably has been the venue of more weddings in Goa than any other hotel or club. Planning receptions and catering, often to 1500 guests or more, at a time, is the latest addition to the many other tasks Rachelle had been quietly and very efficiently handling for me.

When Lenin was born I already was an MLA. If it is true that I didn't have as much on my hands as I wished to help him through his formative years, to my regret, when Ravi made his appearance in this world, my presence at home was even more fitful and sparse. To all appearances, he is a chip of the old block - me, I mean... He is absolutely unconventional. Orthodoxy simply bores him. But tell him to work with his hands and he will do a fine job. Put him in front of a computer and he will work with it like a man possessed. There is little about computers anyway that he doesn't know and, computer technology being one subject to fast obsolesce, he updates his knowledge and imbibes new skills with passion.

Lenin will, I am sure, be a very good architect. What will Ravi be? I don't know yet. Nor does Rachelle. Nor perhaps does Ravi himself. What we all know is that he will never, ever, lose his way.

My only daughter, Rania Divea (Divea after the name of her godmother) was born on October 5, 1981, same day, same month as Ravi, only two years later. She takes after Rachelle. She, like Rachelle, is very shy and I honestly believe that it is how girls must be. It makes them much more charming. She is intelligent and good at studies. But perhaps she is better at extracurricular activities, painting. Being the only girl in the family she is everybody's favourite. But she is a realist and knows to take the rough with the smooth. She will go far, that little girl of mine.

But whether Lenin, Ravi and Rania, they forever owe Rachelle,

their mother, the guidance, she gave and is giving them. Her belief is that parents must try to help their children to give their best, whatever the chosen field. And she has been doing it marvellously.

And so I go my way. An orphan at four. A politician who doesn't quite know what is in store for him at 47. Three children, each of them moulded by the circumstances that prevailed at home when they were born and grew. Some day, soon, I am sure there will be grandchildren. By then, hopefully, I will retire from public life, settle on the small Island I have set my eyes on, in a little cottage by the river, a small garden of my favourite flowers in the front and in the backyard a patch of fertile land which Rachelle and I will sow and till and harvest, with our own hands and watch our grandchildren grow and beget their own children. And read in the newspaper not stories of scandals, not frauds, not of malfeasance and incompetence by ruling politicians as right now. But stories that will do us proud. Of a vibrant Goa. Of a new Goa with a new work culture, competitive, progressive. Craving for higher levels of excellence, enjoying its wealth, human and of natural resources. And creating the conditions for a better Goa. A much, much better Goa.

Abide with me, Lord.



“After 70 odd days as my state's chief minister, the highest honour any Goan could aspire, I also owe my fellow Goan an apology for having, albeit reluctantly but nevertheless helplessly, connived and colluded with power seekers who had their own private agenda.”

“Every single CM, in these last few years, of lack of ideology and ferocious rapacity, had to abet defections. Even I. The people of Goa deserved better behaviour from its elected representatives. Goa is a land of such glorious traditions. It deserves the brightest future. It is a forward looking state. It has an enviable culture, reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of its people. Reflected, as well, in its social and economic indicators, its high level of awareness and consciousness. And, look, what we did to it! Isn't it a shame?!”

*This book has been in the making for sometime. Meanwhile, - as if seven governments in five years between 1990 and 1995 weren't enough - some more governments rose and fell in circumstances that, to say the least, were far from ideal. One thing leading to another, I found myself in the Chief Minister's chair for a brief - hardly 70 days - while, but it was a very educative experience. I saw from very close quarters the best and worst of politics at work, the **real politic**, in all its ruthlessness, in all its ferocity and in a way mindlessness.*



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